



NAVY NEWS

Off-sale date: December 21, 2007

DECEMBER 2007

£1.80

FIRE MISSION

**POUNDING THE TALEBAN
BY LAND AND AIR**

VARIETY SHOW

**LUSTY'S INTERNATIONAL
DEPARTURES**

Destroyer HMS Manchester approaches Gibraltar at the beginning of a ground-breaking deployment accompanying American super-carrier USS Harry S Truman – the first time a British warship has been an integral part of a US carrier strike group. See page 7 for more details.

Picture: LA(Phot) Luis Holden,
FRPU Whale Island



FIRST STRIKE



Fleet Focus

CASTING an eye across the global map above, it's probably never been busier in the two years we've been running the feature.

For this past month or so the men and women of the Royal Navy have truly been scattered to the four corners of the Earth.

We'll begin with the ship farthest away from home (although she's getting ever closer), frigate **HMS Monmouth** which visited the legendary Hawaiian naval base of Pearl Harbor on the latest stage of her world tour (see the centre pages).

By the time she gets home, the Black Duke will have been away for nine months – something the men of **HMS Sceptre** can certainly relate to. The hunter-killer boat returned to Faslane after a record-breaking global deployment (see page 8).

Further proof that the venerable S-boats can still most definitely 'cut the mustard' was provided by **HMS Superb** who evaded Dutch efforts to 'sink' her on NATO exercises in the Adriatic (also see page 8).

Both Superb and Sceptre will be superseded by the **Astute** class and the first of class dived for the first time in a test basin in Barrow (see page 9).

Moving above the surface... The Gulf and Afghanistan very much remain the focal points of efforts by all the RN, RM and Fleet Air Arm.

The **Naval Strike Wing** (see opposite) continues to provide daily support to troops on the ground in Afghanistan, including the green berets of **40 Commando** (see pages 16 and 17).

To the south-west, **HMS Argyll** has taken over from her sister **HMS Richmond** as the current Gulf guardian (see page 10) while **HMS Enterprise** is updating the existing poor charts of the northern Gulf (see page 5). Also in the Middle East region now is **HMS Campbeltown** which most recently has been working with the Yemenis (see page 13).

Strike carrier **HMS Illustrious** will be heading east of Suez in the New Year. To gear up for her 2008 mission she's been practising with RAF Harriers in the North Sea (see pages 16-17).

Lusty's sister **HMS Ark Royal** (aka 'the other ship') has also been honing her aviation skills with trainee pilots and observers of **702 NAS** off the Iberian Peninsula (see page 5).

Fellow Lynx fliers in **815 NAS** are proving to be a powerful team working with **RFA Wave Knight** and **HMS Portland** in the Caribbean. Portland's flight bagged a haul of cocaine (see right), while Wave Knight's Lynx was instrumental in carrying aid to the victims of Hurricane Noel (see page 4).

Wave Knight also performed her more traditional RAS role, topping up **HMS Dumbarton Castle** as the Falklands guardship prepared to head across the Atlantic for home to pay off (see page 7).

HMS Clyde is, momentarily, the only ship in the Falklands. **HMS Southampton** has left the islands having taken part in a disaster exercise in South Georgia (see page 12) and November 11 ceremonies in Cape Town (see page 7).

Clyde won't be lonely for long, however, as she'll soon be joined by **HMS Nottingham**, currently in Brazil (see page 4).

HMS Manchester is making history as the first British warship integrated in an American carrier battlegroup – the USS Harry S Truman (see page 7).

Sailors and marines across the globe have paid homage to their forebears with a series of services of remembrance at home and abroad, on land and at sea. Turn to page 31 for a round-up of events.

One of the most high-profile ceremonies was the dedication of the destroyer memorial at **HMS Cavalier** in Chatham (see page 30).

And finally... No-one has scaled greater heights this autumn than the men of **M Company 42 Commando** – perhaps not even the Naval Strike Wing. The green berets have been exercising in the Himalayas with Indian paratroopers at heights in excess of 18,000ft (see page 24).



● At dawn we crept... Flight Commander Lt Nige Roberts (left) and pilot Lt George Thompson prepare to pounce on the unsuspecting drug-runners in HMS Portland's Lynx

Pictures: LA(Phot) Owen King, FRPU Whale Island

Early whirlybird's big catch

ANOTHER £130m of cocaine will never see the streets of the USA or Europe thanks to the alertness of the RN in the Caribbean.

HMS Portland's Lynx was on a routine dawn patrol when its crew spied a suspicious-looking fishing vessel beneath them.

The mother ship then began a concerted effort to pounce upon the dubious craft, launching her sea boats, while Portland herself gathered speed to intercept.

As the three 'prongs' closed on the fishing boat, its crew became suspicious and began tossing bales into the ocean as their craft increased speed.

The Lynx of 815 NAS suddenly dropped out of the sky and flew alongside the suspect boat.

The drug-runners saw sense and brought their craft to a halt, while Portland's sea boat crews plucked some of the bales out of the water. They eventually recovered 500kg of cocaine, with an estimated street value of \$65m (£32m).

Meanwhile, a US Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment based on Portland carried out a joint search of the fishing boat with the frigate's boarding part and found 1½ tonnes of cocaine during a comprehensive search of the vessel, bringing the total haul to \$260m (£130m).

The fishing boat was then escorted to Venezuela for local authorities to take over the investigation.

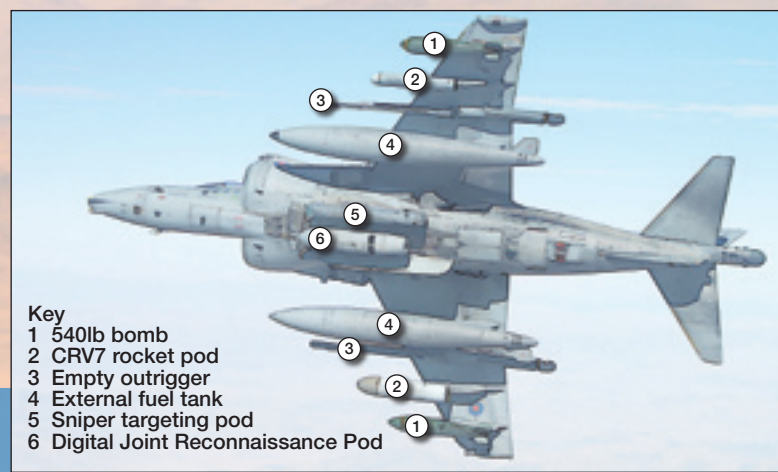
"This is the culmination of five months of hard work and dedication by my ship's company – it's the icing on the cake for what has been an extremely successful deployment," said Portland's CO Cdr Mike Utley.

"I'm delighted that we've taken this amount of drugs out of circulation."

● Portland's two sea boats approach the 'fishing' vessel ahead of boarding it



‘FULLY’ loaded



BANKING thousands of feet above the Hindu Kush, Lt Cdr Phil Lee reveals the firepower carried by naval aviators in their battle with the Taleban and insurgents in Afghanistan.

Here, above the country's second city, Kandahar, the lunar landscape and featureless expanse of sand meets the south-eastern tip of the Kush with its rocky outcrops and scrubland.

The Naval Strike Wing pilot – callsign Phlee – flies a Harrier GR7, one of eight jump jets based at Kandahar from where they support Allied operations in the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar.

And that's not always easy because the NSW are in a time zone all of their own.

The fliers work to Greenwich

Mean Time – a slight complication as the time locally is four and a half hours ahead (luckily the Allied air forces in the region also work to GMT).

At least two Harriers must be ready to scramble at all times in response to calls from troops on the ground.

In addition there are regular sorties in support of the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan.

From Kandahar the Naval jets are within striking distance of operations by their RM



brethren on the ground in Helmand.

Sorties are organised by the Mission Support Cell – the brains and heart of the strike wing's operation in Afghanistan.

It's down to the cell to arrange the pilot rota, oversee aircraft availability, liaise with the ground forces (through a Royal Marines captain), manage air traffic control (keeping aircraft apart) and run fighter control (directing the Harriers on to their targets). It's a control centre which is buzzing 24 hours a day, every day.

Missions begin with a 'met brief' – not just a weather forecast, but an overview of all

factors which affect aerial operations here, including airspace restrictions, engineering issues, events on the ground, and features a Q&A for pilots.

After that planning for the mission itself takes place in earnest – and it normally devours several hours.

Having planned the minutiae of the flight, the strike wing pilots take to the air, while the cell passes on vital updates.

Mission accomplished, the pilots radio a report on any engineering issues which need addressing and the Harriers' armament status – all of which allows a quick turn-around on the Kandahar tarmac should the jump jet be needed again urgently.

Once on the ground, the pilots

sit down with the cell team for a debrief and thorough analysis of the mission, allowing intelligence staff to 'fine tune' their picture of the situation on the ground.

After two months in theatre out of a four-and-a-half-month deployment, the strike wing is settled into its routine in Afghanistan... and getting used to the ubiquitous fine talcum-powder-like sand and dust which penetrates everything.

"The choice of what to wear each day is simple: a flight suit for the aircrew or camouflage kit for those on the ground," said staff officer Lt Mike Gray.

"But despite being in a dusty, land-locked location, morale

is pretty good, the facilities are particularly good, and the naval ethos and matelot sense of humour do export rather well."

Indeed it does. For a start there's Three-Mile Mountain to the north of Kandahar – four miles north of Kandahar to be precise.

"For those of a hill-walking persuasion, it looks inviting," Lt Gray added.

"A visit isn't recommended – due in part to the numerous land mines dotted around, legacy of Afghanistan's many years of conflict.

"Still, it appears pleasant enough in the morning sun."

✎ Royals in Helmand, page 15





Evolution not revolution

THERE'S change at the top of the RN with a submariner, frigate and carrier CO stepping into the shoes... of a submariner, frigate and carrier CO as Commander-in-Chief Fleet.

Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope has taken over from Admiral Sir James Burnell-Nugent as the nation's second most senior sailor.

CINC Fleet is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of all Britain's surface ships, submarines, Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, Fleet Air Arm aircraft and helicopters, plus the Royal Marines.

If that's not enough to devour the admiral's time – shared between Fleet HQ in Portsmouth and Northwood – he's also NATO's Maritime Component Commander.

In taking the reins, or rather ship's wheel, of the Fleet, Admiral Stanhope (pictured above in Devonport by LA(Phot) Shaun Barlow) promises no drastic changes to the way the RN does things – his style, he says, is “evolution rather than revolution”.

Concern for the men and women of the RN and RM will be central to his tenure of the post.

“I appreciate there are pressures on you all brought about by the high operational tempo,” the admiral signalled the entire Service.

“I am acutely aware of how this stretch impacts on families. There are no quick wins, but I will work hard to try to minimise their effects.”

Admiral Stanhope takes over after three years with NATO in the USA where he says the deeds of the Senior Service “are held in the very highest regard”.

He has commanded conventional and nuclear submarines, the frigate HMS London and carrier HMS Illustrious.

His predecessor has retired from the Senior Service having championed the work of Britain's and NATO's navies at the highest levels throughout the alliance.

Home at last... just for a day

HMS Cumberland came alongside in her home port of Devonport for the first time in more than a year as she returned from a week of training and engineering trials.

She wasn't there long. The next morning she was back at sea for another week of trials following an extensive refit. (Admittedly, that refit did take place a few hundred yards away in the naval base so she hasn't been too far away from her usual berth.)

The engines, steering gear and stabilisers received a thorough workout, as did the weapons and sensor systems.

The tests coincided with Remembrance Sunday and the ship's company ceased their usual routines to pay their respects to their forebears with a memorial service and two minutes' silence.

A wreath was laid over the wreck of HMS Penylan, a Hunt-class destroyer sunk off Start Point by German motor torpedo boats as she escorted a supply convoy up the English Channel in World War 2.



Margate, the new boom town



THIS is the moment a German mine exploded, six decades after it was dropped by the Luftwaffe.

It needed a little encouragement from Naval divers first... but when it went, boy what a bang.

Southern Diving Unit 2, based on Horsea Island in Portsmouth, was called out twice to the north Kent coast in three weeks – by the same ill-starred fishing vessel.

It was the Millennia's misfortune to haul two German World War 2-vintage GC mine into her nets on two separate occasions.

Each mine was more than 10ft long – and was packed with 697kg (1,500lb) of explosives.

In both cases the vessel was instructed by the Coastguard to lower the mine slowly back to the seabed and mark the position.

A safety cordon was then put around the position to keep other shipping safely away and the Joint Service EOD Operations Centre at Didcot dispatched the four-man duty watch from SDU2, led on both occasions by PO(D) Paul Bhathena, to deal with

Once the clearance divers reached the

marked position they headed into the briny to confirm the identity of the device and attached an explosive counter-mining charge to it.

And that wasn't easy.

There was little or no visibility in the North Sea off Margate, a difficulty compounded by strong tidal variations and the added hazard that the mine was wrapped up in a fishing net in which the diver could easily become entangled.

“Despite the dangers, these are the types of tasks that clearance divers relish,” said PO(D) Bhathena.

The team praised the help of the crew and support staff of the RNLI's Margate lifeboat who ensured the sea cordon around the mine danger zone was maintained.

After moving to a safe distance, the Diving Team carried out a controlled explosion of the mine which was also observed by a large crowd of Margate residents.

The detonation was felt onshore and was recorded by the British Geological Survey as measuring 2.5 on the Richter scale.

Pictures: Diver1 John Quinn, SDU2

Noble deeds after Noel

SEVEN tonnes of food were delivered to the people of the Dominican Republic by naval fliers after Hurricane Noel smashed its way through the eastern Caribbean.

Noel was the 15th major storm of the season and caused damage valued at more than \$30m to crops alone.

The Dominican Republic bore the brunt of the storm's force – Noel claimed the lives of 84 of its citizens.

815 Naval Air Squadron's 214 Flight and its mother ship, RFA Wave Knight, arrived on the scene about four days after the hurricane had struck.

The Lynx flew to Azua, where an emergency food distribution centre had been set up.

From there, in the first two days of the relief mission alone, the team flew four tonnes of food – 12,000 bags of emergency rations – to people in the districts of Palmar de Ocoa, Yayas De Viaiama and San Jose De Ocoa which had been cut off from the rest of the country by landslides and flooding.

The storm left more than 60,000 people homeless and they were becoming increasingly worried. On occasions, the Lynx



● Locals dash for emergency supplies dropped by 214 Flight in the Dominican Republic in the wake of Hurricane Noel

had to release its payload in the hover, 10ft above the ground to prevent it from being rushed by Noel's desperate victims.

“The devastation caused by Noel was spread over a wide area – bridges and homes were destroyed, communities cut off. It left the poorest people in pretty dire straits,” said Lt Matthew “Taz” Tazewell, the flight commander.

“The maintenance team worked very hard to ensure we could keep up operations ashore – by the end

of the second day the Lynx had flown more than 11 hours. I cannot speak highly enough of them.

“The terrain in the region is challenging: we were operating in valleys at about 2,000-3,000ft with mountain tops at 5,000 or 6,000ft and most of it below was thick forests.

“Our pilot, Lt ‘AJ’ Thompson, thoroughly impressed, putting us into some tight landing sites with limited power and a deft touch.”

The helicopter and its air

and ground crew spent a week ferrying in supplies, as well as carrying the British and Canadian Ambassadors around the country to inspect the damage.

After 33 hours in the air and seven tonnes of food, water purification devices, hygiene kits, clothing and bedding all safely delivered, 214 Flight's work was done.

By then the waters had subsided sufficiently for rescue teams to make temporary repairs to roads and bridges and bring aid by trucks.

Ian Worthington, Britain's Ambassador to Santo Domingo, said there was widespread admiration “for the professionalism and devotion to duty of the air crew and skills and perseverance of the support crew on board Wave Knight.”

Before departing for deserved R&R in the British Virgin Islands, the Flight received an Order of Merit in “sincere appreciation for a job well done”.

Lt Tazewell added: “The feedback we've received has been very positive and the colonel from the US Army in charge of forces in the Dominican Republic has invited us back next year to take part in an exercise to demonstrate our humanitarian role.”

Nottingham's football fans score victory

HERE'S a new one.

Sailors plead with their captain to stay a few more hours in Gib. And the CO obliges...

Pompey-mad supporters aboard HMS Nottingham wanted to extend the destroyer's spell alongside at the Rock – long enough for them to watch their beloved team on the telly.

Nottingham's CO Cdr Andy Price pondered their request... then agreed.

What the Pompey fans aboard didn't realise was that football had little or nothing to do with his decision (*they probably do after reading this – Ed*).

Nottingham needed slightly longer alongside in Gib than originally planned anyway for various bits and bats before beginning her seven-month South Atlantic deployment in earnest.

But the Pompey fans were happy. (The match itself, however, was a rather drab 0-0 draw with West Ham.)

Anyway... when not satiating football supporters, Cdr Price has been guiding his Type 42 destroyer ever closer to the Falklands where she's due to relieve sister HMS Southampton.

The next port of call after Gib was Mindelo in the Cape Verde Islands.

Off the islands she bumped into French frigate Lieutenant de Vaisseau Lavallée.

The two ships swapped sailors and then conducted boarding exercises to find (fake) packets of drugs aboard the respective warships.

That both boarding teams did – despite the best efforts of Nottingham's crew to throw them off the scent.

The two ships parted with the Type 42 making for the mid-Atlantic and ultimately South America.

She arrived in the Brazilian port of Fortaleza in time for November 11 ceremonies.

Sailors paid their respects not merely to those who have fought and died under the White Ensign but also to Nottingham's affiliated Army unit.

2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment – formerly the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters – have only been back from Afghanistan a handful of weeks; nine men in the regiment were killed in action there.

Gun-derful autumn for HMS Exeter

THE 4.5in barrel of HMS Exeter has been glowing as hundreds of shells were fired in the ranges off Gibraltar.

The destroyer played host to gunbay and principal warfare officer students on the first stage of a short autumn deployment to the Med.

Both sets of students had completed the theory side of naval gunnery in the classroom.

Now the gun crew of Exeter stood aside and let the trainees run the 4.5in under the watchful eye of COT – the Captain of Turret CPO Peters from the Flag Officer Sea Training.

Meanwhile, in the ops room, the PWO students were perfecting the direction of gunfire support.

Four days of shooting was carried out by the destroyer, curtailed on day four by a slight hiccup – thankfully fixed by the combined efforts of weapons and marine engineering departments.

With the training complete, Exeter sailed into the Rock to offload its student guests and give her ship's company some R&R before sailing into the Med past the volcanic island of Stromboli and through the Straits of Messina, for autumn exercises with Allied navies.



Maintaining Lynx with the Danes

THREE Lynx and 50 men and women to look after them from 815 NAS headed to unfamiliar green surroundings for a three-week exercise.

Normally found on the back of frigates and destroyers, the Lynx instead decamped to a field in the Baltic island of Bornholm for Danex07 – Danish-run war games (hence the name) involving forces from the UK, Germany, Poland and Norway.

Despite being based in a field, the role initially for the 815 fliers was a typical one – find and hunt down enemy shipping (chiefly Norwegian fast patrol craft).

Less typical was the need to evacuate 300 civilians stricken by an ‘earthquake’.

From the fields of Bornholm, the force upped sticks and relocated to a Danish airbase in Ålborg in northern Jutland as Danex reached its climax.

This time, the Lynx were at the beck and call of a Danish task force – who placed heavy demands on the Brits.

“The exercise was as much a test for the engineers and logisticians as it was for the aircrew,” said Lt Gary Standen, 815’s air engineering officer for the exercise.

“It was an excellent opportunity for us to hone our engineering skills while operating in a novel environment.”

That novel environment saw some relatively novel experiences for the fliers who carried out exercises with Special Forces and fired their .5 gun on the Danish ranges (something the logistics officer proved a dab hand at, we’re told).

Overall, the Lynx detachment returned to the UK well satisfied with its achievements.

“The benefit to the crews – and the Lynx force as a whole – from operating with foreign units in unfamiliar locations and airspace is immeasurable,” said Lt Cdr Mike Ryan, who headed the FAA Lynx input to Danex.

“It was a busy and immensely valuable exercise.”

And maintaining Lynx with Ark

VARIETY in the field of naval aviation in 2007 is not merely the preserve of HMS Illustrious.

No, HMS Ark Royal is equally versatile, as her ship’s company have demonstrated off the Iberian Peninsula.

While Lusty was hosting RAF jump jets in the North Sea, Ark (or ‘the other one’ as a certain ship’s company know her – see pages 22 and 23) took herself south.

Ark spent the early autumn in the Solent and South-West Approaches hosting Sea Kings and RAF Chinooks for amphibious exercises.

Then she headed to Iberian waters to give trainee Lynx pilots and observers of 702 NAS a chance to earn vital at-sea qualifications as they progress through training towards their front-line careers.

There were deck landing qualifications to pick up initially, followed by more challenging serials, including search-and-rescue missions, lifting loads, ferrying passengers, dropping boarding parties by rapid roping and acting as observers for naval gunfire support squeezed in during the intensive package of exercises.

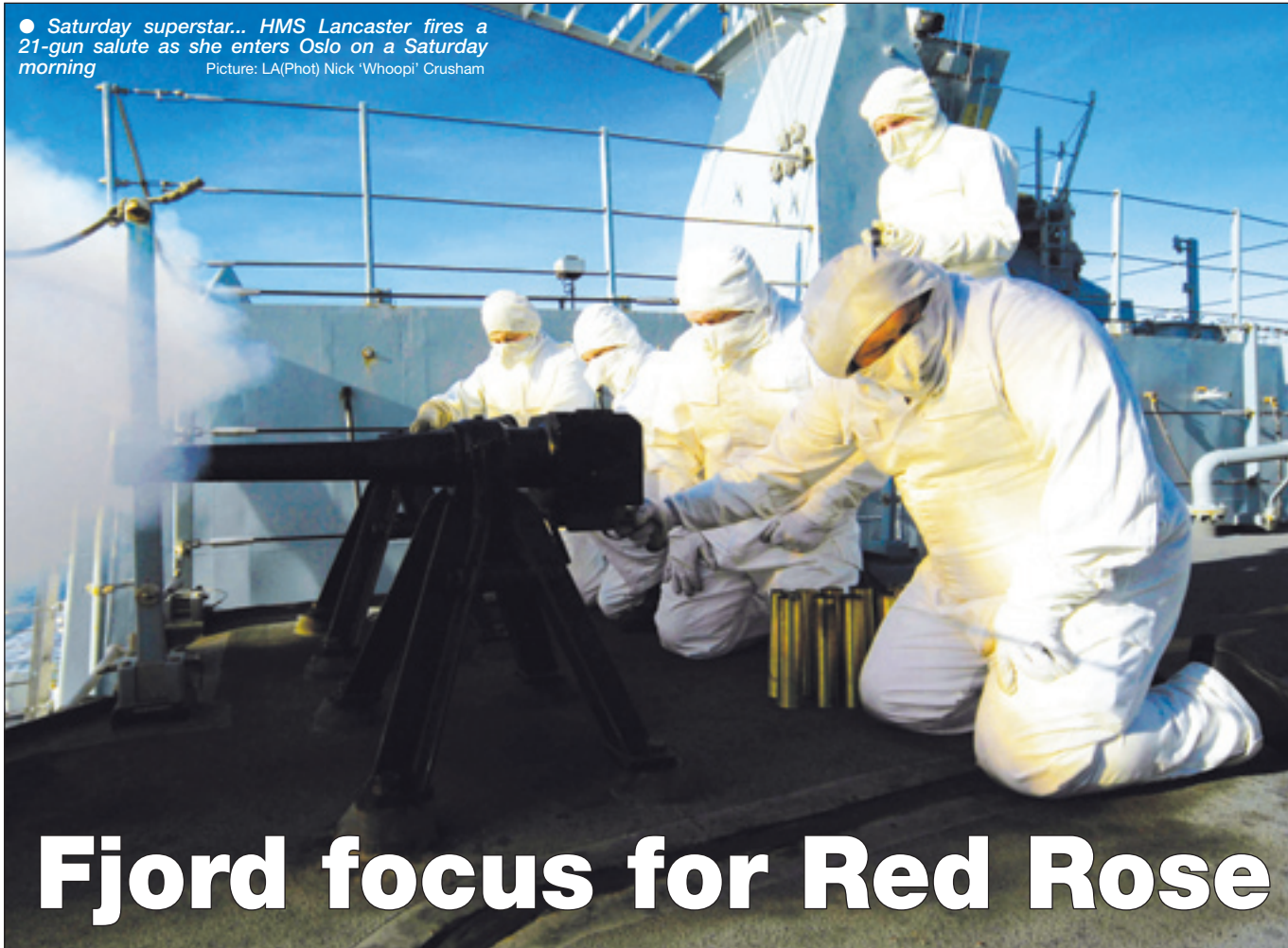
Ark’s work climaxed with an anti-submarine exercise involving the Lynx and an air defence exercise with six Portuguese F16s bearing down on the carrier.

The exercises off Portugal coincided with Remembrance Sunday.

Routines aboard Ark came to a halt at 11am on November 11 as most of the ship’s company gathered in the hangar for a service led by the carrier’s chaplain, the Rev John Hill.

● *Saturday superstar... HMS Lancaster fires a 21-gun salute as she enters Oslo on a Saturday morning*

Picture: LA(Phot) Nick 'Whoopi' Crusham



Fjord focus for Red Rose

THE Red Rose’s mini autumn deployment to the Baltic continued with a visit to the Norwegian capital, Oslo.

HMS Lancaster negotiated the beautiful, if challenging, waters of Oslofjord to arrive at Søndre Akershus berth in the heart of the city.

The frigate announced her arrival on a Saturday morning

(hopefully not too early) with a 21-gun salute, answered by a local fort.

The ship’s potent rugby team demolished a local side 68-0 (*see back page*), but the football squad fared less well (they did, however, enjoy the post-match hospitality courtesy of the British Embassy).

The third day of the stay was devoted to official ceremonies.

Lancaster’s CO Cdr Richard Moss and the ship’s guard headed to the Orlogsgasten (‘Navy sailor’) memorial which remembers those who served “for king, country and the honour of the flag through five centuries”.

The ship ended her visit with a cocktail party and ceremonial sunset for dignitaries, before sailing back down Oslofjord and on to Kiel.

There she joined forces with other Allied warships ahead of Exercise Northern Coasts, intended to test the ability of an international maritime force to uphold a UN Security Council resolution.

Northern Coasts was due to end with a visit to the Polish port of Gdynia, after which the Red Rose will be returning to Portsmouth for Christmas.

Still boldly going...

D-E-V-O-N-P-O-R-T.

We thought we’d spell it out for the good folk of HMS Enterprise as they’ve probably forgotten how to spell the name of their home port, let alone what it looks like.

For the fourth consecutive year, the survey ship’s sailors will be tucking into turkey and all the trimmings (well, a ‘traditional’ turkey curry actually) with the sun blazing down on them.

Christmas 2007 will be spent in Mumbai (in 2006 it was Ghana, the Seychelles in 2005 and Naples the year before).

Christmas Eve 2006 was spent under the stars on a Ghanaian beach as the sailors ensured turtle eggs were not snaffled by predators.

Mumbai won’t be quite as exotic perhaps... but it will provide welcome relief after a very busy autumn.

Twelve months ago Enterprise found herself updating – or even creating – charts of waters off Nigeria, chiefly around oil installations.

Twelve months on and Enterprise is again updating charts around oil installations, in this instance the Iraqi platforms at the tip of the Gulf.

Charts of the northern Gulf and Iraq’s territorial waters are pretty poor.

Enterprise’s sister Echo laid the foundations

for improving those maps when she was out here last year; now it’s Enterprise turn to follow up that groundbreaking work.

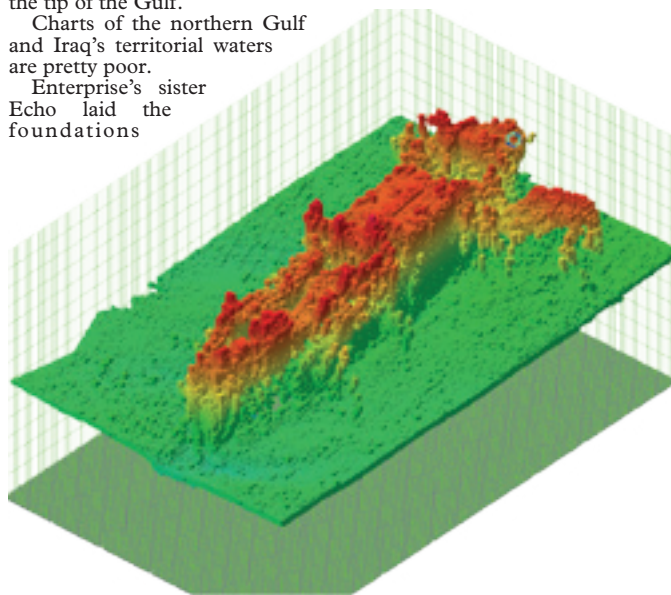
Why? Because apart from a heavy Allied warship presence in the region, the northern Gulf is awash with ships and boats – and Iraq needs the trade to support her economy.

“Merchant traffic pays whacking insurance premiums because of the presence of mine danger areas and because of the relatively poor coverage of modern surveys around the oil platforms,” said Lt Ben Barrett, Enterprise’s meteorological officer.

It’s work which continues long into the new year. It will be April before Enterprise finally catches sight of Smeaton’s Tower again, by which time she will have been away from home for 19 months.

“It will be odd,” says Lt Barrett. “We are busy looking at how to order the local currency, where to go in an evening and we’re also trying to find out about local customs and practices.”

● *A vibrant 3D sonar image from Enterprise of the wreck of a merchantman in the Gulf*



Somerset set for last act

WHILE HMS Bulwark has just completed her Operational Sea Training (*see overleaf*), HMS Somerset is in the latter stages of that rigamarole, the last act on her reactivation following an extensive refit in Rosyth.

Unlike previous ships going through OST – which determines whether a warship is fit for front-line duties or not – Somerset’s is charted for public consumption, courtesy of her CO’s diary.

Cdr Rob Wilson is keeping a popular internet ‘blog’ (hms-somerset-co.blogspot.com), charting the highs and lows of life in charge of the Type 23 frigate.

OST began with 65 sailors from FOST joining Somerset (that’s one assessor for every three crew members) to judge the state of the ship and her sailors’ training.

Despite some initial nerves from the ship’s company, the training began promisingly.

The engines were purring, radar picked up a test aircraft, sonar identified a marker buoy dropped in the Channel, the Kryten 4.5in gun boomed furiously over Plymouth Sound... and then the rudders failed.

This wasn’t a FOST-induced accident, rather a messy hydraulic leak. That said, within an hour, the engineers had the problem fixed and Somerset was under way again.

“It was a damn good effort all-round,” said Cdr Wilson.

The FOSTies too were apparently impressed.

“Of course we were far from perfect – indeed we were desperately in need of the training we were about to undergo,” says Somerset’s CO. “But the trainers’ view was that we had brought Somerset as far as was possible on our own, that we were ready and fit to train.”



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Round, round, we get around

WITH the exception of university boat HMS Archer, visits to the ‘Granite City’ by ships under the White Ensign are relatively few.

Aberdeen’s harbour could be found bristling with battleship grey last month as half a dozen minehunters berthed at Regent and Trinity Quays.

Admittedly, only one flew the White Ensign, **HMS Middleton**.

The rest of the force comprised Belgian, Dutch, German, Norwegian and Lithuanian ships – NATO’s Standing Mine Countermeasures Group 1.

The group has been scouring northern waters for the detritus of a century of war at sea, as well as conducting exercises dealing with the present-day mine threat.

The task force spent ten days in the Bay de la Seine in search of wartime ordnance.

Given the importance of the Calvados coastline, the waters were heavily mined and once the Allies landed in Normandy, the Germans made numerous attempts to attack the invasion fleet.

Half a dozen wartime pieces of ordnance, including a German torpedo were found – and destroyed – by the NATO force.

More recently, the task group has been conducting sweeps of the North Sea searching for discarded ordnance off Britain’s east coast.

The team from another British warship could also be found north of the border.

Cdr Paul Romney and three shipmates left **HMS Sutherland** behind in Devonport on a two-day visit to the Scottish region which bears the same name, reaffirming ties with the local community.

The quartet handed over £500 to Rosehall Primary School following fund-raising efforts aboard Sutherland.

Older children grilled Cdr Romney during a presentation and Q&A session to sixth formers at Farr High School.

After that the sailors were probably glad of a tour of Clynelish Distillery, before they headed to the Royal Dornoch clubhouse for an official reception hosted by the Highland Council.

The ship herself was unable to visit her namesake region as she’s currently undergoing a multi-million-pound refit.

On the opposite side of the country, Sandown-class mine countermeasures ship **HMS Bangor** could be found for four days in Liverpool’s Canning Dock.

The ship’s company have endured a fairly demanding autumn as they prepare to fly out to the Gulf and replace the crew of HMS Ramsey, stationed in Bahrain for three years with sister HMS Blyth.

All Sandown-class crews are being rotated through the Gulf duo to sustain operations in the region, rather than spend months transiting to and from the Middle East.

During four days on the Mersey, the ship hosted scores of local school children and dignitaries, offered guided tours to the nautical buffs from the Mersey Naval and Maritime Society and the World Ship Society, while Bangor’s football team challenged the Over the Hill Mob to a match.

Far to the south **HMS Shoreham** was on home ‘soil’ – as was her Commanding Officer.

Lt Cdr Nick Borbone attended Durrington High School in nearby Worthing and lives in West Sussex to this day.

So it was a particularly warm homecoming for him as he brought the Faslane-based minehunter into the Sussex port after which his ship is named.

The Sandown-class warship spent four days alongside on a goodwill visit, hosting Worthing’s Sea Cadet unit TS Vanguard, students from Brighton and Hove College, Durrington Sea Scouts, and local bigwigs.

The ship also carried 15 students from a ‘military preparation course’ from Portsmouth back to the city.



● *Sea of flame... A Sea Dart roars away from its launcher on HMS Liverpool bound for its Mirach drone target*

Picture: LA(Phot) Jannine Hartmann, FRPU Whale Island

Bangs for your buck

SOME £4m of naval hardware disintegrated in the Western Approaches as two sisters tested their missile systems.

HMS Edinburgh and Liverpool both fired three Sea Darts apiece during a ‘high seas firing’ trial to ensure the anti-air missile which the vessels are built around did what it was supposed to do.

Targets for the £500,000 missiles were provided by the experts of 792 Naval Air Squadron, a specialist unit which operates Mirach drones which simulate an incoming aircraft or missile.

The 792 team joined the ships, setting up the Mirach on the flight deck, then launching the robot aircraft into the Atlantic sky, controlling them from heights ranging from 10ft above the waves to 40,000ft at sub-sonic speeds.

Loosing Sea Darts is not something you want to do in range of commercial air traffic. An RAF Nimrod patrolled the skies to keep any aircraft or shipping away from the test areas.

The £200,000 drones can be recovered by parachute – but in this instance Sea Dart impacted with the Mirachs with a combined collision speed around three times the speed of sound, ensuring nothing was left of either hunter or prey.

“This was a hugely-important test of both Liverpool’s and Edinburgh’s equipment and people,” said Cdr Craig Wood, Liverpool’s Commanding Officer.

“The success of these firings is a resounding endorsement.”

Sea Dart is a proven weapon; its successor, however, is not – yet.

But over the winter, the missile which will be the backbone of the Fleet’s air defence for the next three decades will undergo extensive trials from a test barge

in the Mediterranean.

Longbow served as the trials barge for Seawolf missiles, used by Type 22 and 23 frigates for close aerial defence, back in the 1970s.

But six years ago, BMTMarineProjects began transforming it to accommodate Sampson radar (a spinning spiky egg for want of a better analogy) on top of a 80ft mast and to hold Aster missiles in its silo.

Aster itself has been fired successfully at targets on ranges in southern France, while Longbow has been conducting radar trials off the Isle of Wight for most of the summer and autumn.

But marrying the Sampson radar with the computer software and the Aster – the whole package comprises the Principal Anti-Air



The magnificent seven (weeks)

READY for anything... That’s the verdict on assault ship HMS Bulwark after seven intensive autumn weeks.

The Devonport-based vessel’s long road back to the front line following an overhaul reached its climax in south western waters and shores.

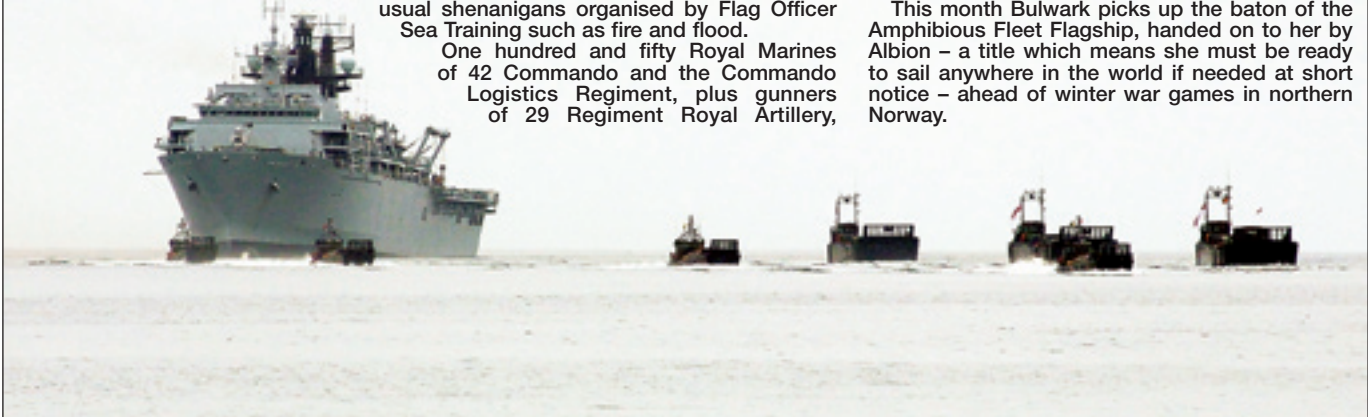
As a capital ship with unique capabilities (*well, unique if you discount her sister Albion – Ed*), Bulwark ‘enjoys’ specially-adapted training to test her assault ship function, as well as all the usual shenanigans organised by Flag Officer Sea Training such as fire and flood.

One hundred and fifty Royal Marines of 42 Commando and the Commando Logistics Regiment, plus gunners of 29 Regiment Royal Artillery,

launched a series of raids from Bulwark against ‘targets’ in Cornwall and Dorset, either via landing craft or via the Junglie Sea Kings of 845 and 846 NAS, during the final stage of training: Exercise South-west Sabre.

With training completed, the ship went on a mini tour of the UK, including a visit to London to launch the autumn programme by the RN Presentation Team and fly the flag for the Senior Service in the capital.

This month Bulwark picks up the baton of the Amphibious Fleet Flagship, handed on to her by Albion – a title which means she must be ready to sail anywhere in the world if needed at short notice – ahead of winter war games in northern Norway.



● *Assaulting we will go... LCU and LCVP landing craft leave HMS Bulwark carrying Royal Marines bound for shore*

Picture: LA(Phot) Pepe Hogan, HMS Bulwark

Data days for Chiddingfold

MINEHUNTER HMS Chiddingfold is finally back home in Pompey after a busy 2007 testing Britain’s latest anti-mine weapon.

Most of the year has been devoted to perfecting the use of SeaFox, the next-generation robot undersea vehicle used by mine warfare forces to find and destroy ordnance on or tethered to the seabed.

SeaFox is replacing the ‘yellow submarines’ currently used by Sandown and Hunt-class mine countermeasures vessels and trials with the system by Cheery Chid (a new nickname on us but we quite like it) have shown what a step forward it is from the existing remote-controlled craft.

Use of SeaFox still needs to be perfected, however, and Chiddingfold embarked a team of boffins behind the piece of kit for two weeks of trials and tests off the Isle of Skye.

Conditions were ‘challenging’ at times, but SeaFox was nevertheless launched almost 50 times against a number of training mines laid on the seabed.

The data gathered during these test runs allowed the engineers to tweak the software which drives SeaFox ahead of a live firing of the weapon in the coming months.

After Christmas in Portsmouth, Cheery Chid sails east of Suez in the new year accompanied by her sister HMS Atherstone.

Grimsby’s back

ALMOST two years after her encounter with the side of a Norwegian fjord (the fjord came off better), HMS Grimsby returns to the water this month.

The Sandown-class minehunter was seriously damaged during exercises north of Bergen in February 2006 and had to be piggy-backed home on a specialist transporter vessel.

Since then she has been in a shed at Rosyth where a team from Babcock have been refitting Grimsby so she can rejoin Mine Countermeasures Squadron No 1.

The ship’s company promise that the vessel emerging from that shed will make Grimsby “look like new”.

Initial trials will be conducted this month before the ship’s company (currently living ashore) file back on board in the new year, led by new CO Lt Cdr Adam Parnell.

Once the ship receives her sea safety certificates and a team from the Flag Officer Sea Training is satisfied the sailors can handle every eventuality, front-line training begins in earnest. 2008 will be devoured largely by that training and by visits around the UK.

Tyne’s fine time

FISHERY protection ship HMS Tyne has been working with her Dutch counterpart on a sweep of the North Sea to catch trawlers breaking the law.

Tyne sailed out of Den Helder with the Dutch Coastguard vessel Barend Biesheuvel for Operation Shark, a week-long swoop upon vessels suspected of illegal fishing activities in the North Sea.

The Tyne team used the Netherlands’ comprehensive intelligence picture to strike at dawn, sending boarding parties at long range to inspect fishing vessels.

These dawn raids proved successful with various illegal activities reported – and illegal fishing gear found.

Tyne handed over to HMS Quorn for the second week of Shark while she headed to the North East for a break from fishery protection – and a visit to her affiliates.

Those included the children’s ward of North Tyneside General Hospital where the sailors handed over £750, proceeds from bingo and other fund-raising events, to allow the ward to buy a second ‘child-friendly’ wheelchair.

Saints and brothers

AT LAST warm climes beckoned for HMS Southampton after a chilly deployment in the South Atlantic.

With her marathon tour-of-duty coming to a close, the Portsmouth-based destroyer finally left the Americas behind and sailed for a seven-day spell in Cape Town.

That visit fell over Remembrance weekend and aside from taking a full part in the famous port's memorial service – South Africans fought with distinction in both World Wars, notably on the Somme and in North Africa – the British sailors linked hands with their South African comrades for a particularly poignant commemoration.

The day before the November 11 ceremonies, Cape Town ground to a halt to recall a Great War disaster which resonates through the decades for South Africa.

The troopship SS Mendi was struck by a liner in fog off the Isle of Wight and sank, taking more than 600 troops – most of them black – down with her.

The fortitude of those men, epitomised by their chaplain who urged the Mendi's passengers to be calm as the ship sank crying "let us die like brothers", serves as an inspiration to their present-day successors.

Named in their honour is the new corvette SAS Mendi, which berthed alongside Southampton on Cape Town's historic Victoria and Alfred Waterfront.

The Mendi's loss is particularly pertinent to HMS Southampton: many of the victims of the tragedy are buried in Southampton's Hollybrook Cemetery.

And so both ships' companies stood side-by-side with Dr Zwideinga Pallo Jordan, South Africa's arts minister, and Paul Boateng, the British High Commissioner to the country, to mark the 90th anniversary of the Mendi's loss.

Once the ceremonies were over, the mood lifted somewhat as the Saints let their hair down in style.

For some, climbing Table Mountain was a must.

Others toured the local vineyards (where sampling the produce was also a must).

And others still enjoyed adventure sports ranging from horse riding to bungee jumping and skydiving.

There were also more conventional sports to be played: the ship's football and cricket teams both took to the field against Cape Town's Olympic Sports Club.

Southampton returns to Portsmouth this month.

✉ Mighty 90 in South Georgia, page 12



● *Wrapped attention... HMS Manchester's sailors man the upper deck on a bitterly cold November day as the destroyer leaves Portsmouth*

Picture: LA(Phot) Luis Holden, FRPU Whale Island

New star of the Truman Show

THE crew of HMS Manchester have the unique honour of guarding 100,000 tons of US military hardware for the next six months.

The Busy Bee is heading to the Mediterranean and Middle East as chaperone for super-carrier USS Harry S Truman.

This is the first time a British warship has been formally part of an American carrier battlegroup.

It follows a deal struck between the two Allies last year.

Cdr David Dominy, Manchester's Commanding Officer, said this was an opportunity the men and women of the Busy Bee were "ready to seize".

He added: "For the UK it shows the trust the Americans have in the Royal Navy – our capability and our ability to influence in the region."

"Manchester is the first Royal Navy escort – frigate or destroyer – which has been allowed to fully integrate with an American strike group."

"It is difficult to pull yourself away from young families and loved ones for seven months."

"But it's what we joined the Navy to do and it's important business for the Government."

The mission begins in the Med, before shifting east of Suez to the Somali coast where the force will put the boot into pirates.

To prepare herself for thinking and acting American, Manchester headed to the USA in the summer where she worked alongside US carrier groups.

Before leaving Portsmouth to join the American task group, the Busy Bee paid her final visit to a UK port in 2007.

Cardiff was that port, although much of the visit was devoted to the market town of Hereford.

Hereford lost its adopted ship, HMS Antelope, during the Falklands conflict – a loss remembered by the town and by Manchester at a Falklands 25 commemoration.

The ship also hosted local and Hereford dignitaries, URNU cadets from the universities of Bristol, Birmingham and Wales, firefighters and schoolchildren.

More than 650 people trekked aboard the Busy Bee during an open afternoon for a behind-the-

scenes glimpse of life aboard a British warship.

And the stokers mess also enjoyed a behind-the-scenes tour... they had a comprehensive look around Cardiff's Millennium Stadium.

Perish or conquer

FIVE budding submarine commanders plus their mentor/assessor (aka 'Teacher') joined HMS Tireless for a frantic month beneath the waves.

Everything a submarine's commanding officer might be expected to deal with – and much more besides – was thrown at the quintet as the latest Submarine Command Course, commonly known as Perisher, reached its climax off western Scotland.

There can be few sights more frightening to any submariner than a destroyer or frigate bearing down on their boat at full speed.

But the 'eyes only' section of Perisher is also regarded as the most exhilarating part of the course: to launch a successful torpedo attack while every skimmer in the area tries to charge you down.

And then there's what the Germans call the *Freijagd* – the free for all – where any ship venturing within torpedo range of Tireless became a target, foe and friend. In true deep fashion, the watches squabbled over who had sunk the most tonnage.

In between this game of hunted and hunter, the Devonport-based boat squeezed in Exercise Neptune Warrior, weapons drill tests in the British Underwater Test and Evaluation Centre on the Kyle of Lochalsh, intelligence gathering and Tomahawk missile launch procedures.

Just to add to the pressure for the Perisher students, the final stages of their

assessment were witnessed by Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Admiral Sir James Burnell-Nugent... a course he passed three decades ago.

The Perishers finally left the boat in Devonian waters... to be replaced by ten potential officer cadets experiencing life at sea in a submarine for the first time.

The cadets sailed across Lyme Bay to Portland, where a fairly lengthy stop was planned – Tireless was the first submarine to visit since the RN base closed a dozen years ago.

Tireless was in town to test the harbour's Z-Berth, a quay designated specially for nuclear submarines.

But she also paid homage to her forebears.

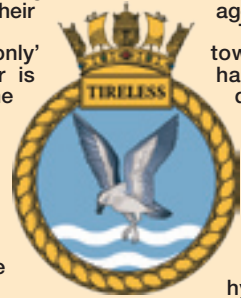
Thirteen men were killed in June 1955 when a hydrogen peroxide-fuelled torpedo exploded

in HMS Sidon, sending the boat to the bottom of the harbour.

Tireless' CO Cdr Ed Ahlgren joined veteran submariners and local Sea Cadets at a commemorative service, laying a wreath on the Sidon monument – fittingly a slab of Portland stone – which overlooks the harbour.

Tireless finally returned to Devonport in exciting fashion.

The boat conducted a series of training exercises with frogmen in Whitsand Bay and inside Plymouth's breakwater which was apparently a "spectacular show for the watching yachts, fishing vessels and ferries."



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Lima. Dakar. Scarborough?

BY THE time you read this HMS Dumbarton Castle will be plain old Dumbarton Castle.

But as we write this, she's still proudly prefixed by the letters H, M, and S.

The Falkland Islands patrol vessels has been making her back from the South Atlantic in fairly gentle fashion.

DC – known as The Last Castle as the sole survivor of the Castle-class (there were, admittedly, only two ships) – chose to return to Portsmouth not by the direct route but via the Pacific.

That meant first passage through the Magellan Straits and transit of the various natural waterways and canals of Patagonia in southern Chile towards her first port of call, Valparaiso.

Highlights of the goodwill work carried out in the famous Chilean port included laying a wreath at the monument of national hero Capitan Arturo Prat and tours of the ship offered to local schoolchildren and Chilean Naval cadets.

Then it was on to Callao in Peru for a brief two-day visit. The now customary official receptions took place on the first day for local dignitaries and the Peruvian Navy.

The ship also hosted a children's party for youngsters from a local orphanage.

Despite the brevity of the visit, there was enough time for some sailors to head to Lima's downtown

region... where they found an English-themed pub to watch the Rugby World Cup semi-final triumph over France.

Callao was the last stop in the Pacific. Next stop was the Panama Canal, but first there was the invisible barrier of the Equator to cross.

King Neptune and his aides (who looked suspiciously like many of the senior ratings in drag) were kind enough to permit DC's sailors across the line – which many did by swimming over the Equator.

After an overnight passage of the Panama Canal, the patrol ship emerged in the Caribbean and headed straight for Scarborough (the one in Tobago, not the one in Yorkshire).

Six days were spent in the island, chiefly allowing the sailors to let their hair down for the final time before the long Atlantic crossing.

The highlight of this spell of R&R was a barbecue on the beach at Pigeon Point.

And then the Atlantic beckoned. First the ship replenished courtesy of tanker RFA Wave Ruler, then she headed for Dakar.

There was a 24-hour turnaround in the Senegalese port – time aplenty to take on all necessary supplies and even squeeze in a few official functions.

Dumbarton Castle entered Portsmouth for the final time on November 22 and was due to officially decommission eight days later.



Scrabble and scramble

WHILE HMS Superb and the Dutch Navy were locking horns (see below right), HMS York was shaking hands with Croatia.

The destroyer hosted Porucink Horvete Stipe Skelin and Desetnik Niksa Svilick at the end of Exercise Noble Midas.

Apart from being good scores at Scrabble, *Porucink Horvete* and *Desetnik* are Croatian for 'lieutenant' and 'ensign' respectively.

Anyway, the duo spent 11 days aboard the Type 42 as she ended her escort duties with HMS *Illustrious*, sailing home to Portsmouth from the Adriatic at the end of NATO's three-week Exercise Noble Midas.

Apart from embracing all aspects of life aboard a Royal Navy warship, the Croatian pair sampled traditional Senior Service hospitality courtesy of runs ashore in Gib and Lisbon as York made her way back to the Solent.

Lt Skelin and Ens Svilick are the first Croatian sailors to enjoy an exchange with the Royal Navy.

It is hoped the link-up will help their country towards joining the NATO alliance.

"It's been an extremely rewarding visit," said Lt Skelin.

"I learned a lot about Royal Navy operations in a short time. Some things are the same, some things are not."

Once back in Pompey, the Navy's specialists in air defence (it is York's *raison d'être*) spent a day with the Army's specialists in air defence, 47 Regiment Royal Artillery, based at Thorney Island between Portsmouth and Chichester.

Thoroughly acquainted with the regiment's kit and activities, the 11 Yorkies moved up the road to Longmoor camp – alongside the Special Air Service (yes, you read correctly).

The SAS put the matelots through their paces at a village designed to prepare soldiers for urban combat (aka 'fighting in someone's house').

S/Lt Lee Bodkin led the first squad through a damp tunnel, past burning cars and through a haze from smoke grenades to enter the edge of the village and secure several houses.

Then it fell to S/Lt Paul Caddy and his team to ferry ammo to the attackers and bolster their attack.

Large ammunition boxes and assault equipment had to be hauled across the 'battlefield'.

Unfortunately, one of the reinforcements set off a trip wire moving across open ground, alerting the enemy to their presence. The SAS, not surprisingly, showed no mercy.

Despite their mauling, the sailors (heavily camouflaged), returned to the ship with tales of epic bravery in the heat of cross-fire.

We have mist you

VETERAN hunter-killer submarine HMS *Sceptre* has not featured in the good pages of *Navy News* for quite some time (*I would say about nine months – Ed*).

The Fleet submarine has completed the longest unsupported deployment by a boat in the Silent Service's 106-year history, finally returning to Faslane on a suitably murky Clyde morning.

Much of what the 29-year-old Swiftsure-class boat did while she was away remains classified. But we can tell you that she clocked up 54,000 miles in a wide-ranging deployment which took her to the Gulf, South Africa and Australia and exercises with the US, Australian and South African navies.

And she did all that by converting the equivalent of roughly a sugar cube of matter into energy in her nuclear reactor.

"It's an awfully long time – one of the longest voyages in the history of the Submarine Service, but there's been a great feeling of camaraderie on board" said Cdr Jim Perks, *Sceptre*'s Commanding Officer.

"My men performed to an exemplary standard."

Although the boat herself has been away since the turn of the year, most of her crew were rotated, generally spending six months on board. But that in itself is no mean feat.

The S-boats are 'old school'. Unlike their successor *Astute*-class, no man has his own pit: he hot bunks.

Luckily, the hunter-killers do at least pay visits to foreign ports (unlike the bombers) where the deeps are accommodated in hotels and let their hair down.

This deployment has seen some familiar ports of call – Gibraltar, Bahrain, Singapore – and some less common ones – Fremantle and Cape Town.

In between the fun, there's been a lot of work to do – especially with the navies of Australia and South Africa where *Sceptre*'s team felt both sides had benefitted enormously from working together.

"A nine-month deployment is something that probably only another submariner could appreciate," said Capt Richard Baum, Captain of Submarines at HM Naval Base Clyde, who welcomed the boat and her 116 submariners home.

"Living conditions on these boats are tight to say the least – tolerable but not comfortable."

Around 200 family and friends were on hand to wave *Sceptre* home, first from the Rhu Narrows, then after a quick bus ride, from the jetty at Faslane.

The party atmosphere continued



● Still waving the flag... (Above) Families greet *Sceptre* as she glides through the Rhu Narrows and (right) two youngsters anxiously await the return of dad

Pictures: WO1(Phot) Ian Arthur and LA(Phot) Kelly McAlinden, FRPU Clyde

as the submariners and loved ones moved to Neptune sailing club for a homecoming reception before heading off on leave.

Sceptre is enjoying the twilight days of her career; she will be replaced by HMS *Ambush* which enters service in around 2010.

"Praise must go to HMS *Sceptre* herself – she's a remarkable piece of

engineering which has responded to every demand asked of her," said Capt Baum.

"She might look a bit tired and weary, but then she's travelled the equivalent distance of circumnavigating the globe."

After a spell of TLC alongside, the boat returns to sea next month for work-up.



Superb goes Dutch

In the wonderful world of naval euphemisms, certain words crop up repeatedly.

Lively, for example. Lively means 'hair raising' or 'scary'.

Challenging. Or bloody hard work.

And interesting. Interesting = pass me a clean pair of trousers.

For, we are told, the launching of several torpedoes at hunter-killer boat HMS *Superb* was 'of particular interest' to the submarine...

The offenders were the Dutch, who loosed numerous 'fish' in the Adriatic during NATO exercises – with the Super Bee as their intended victims.

You will, of course, be pleased to know that the Cloggies were thwarted by the superb (pun intended) skill of the Silent Servicemen.

The Super Bee spent seven weeks on deployment, rather shorter than *Sceptre*'s, but jam-packed with incident.

The boat left Faslane initially for some FOST top-up training ahead of the main event, Exercise Noble Midas.

We reported the deeds of the surface ships – *Illustrious*,

Chatham, York, Northumberland and RFA Fort George. We didn't tell you about *Superb* (for operational reasons).

Now she's back in Faslane, we can tell you about her. Actually, we can't tell you that much about her, being the secretive world of the deeps, but when not being fired at by the Dutch (admittedly they were dummy torpedoes), *Superb* did send some of her ship's company with HMS Chatham and Northumberland, and the skimmers went in the opposite direction.

The submariners probably enjoyed their change of environment rather more, not least because their time in the frigates allowed them to enjoy a 'Hollywood dhoby' (which is, according to the chaps at Rum Ration 'spending as long as you like in the shower without worrying about water consumption').

Thoroughly clean and relaxed, the deeps returned to their boat for a series of sonar trials before a cracking run ashore in Gib and then it was back to the Clyde.

● *Superb* on the surface in the Adriatic



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'Dive into the bottom of the deep'

FOR four months the waters have lapped around HMS Astute.

Now they have washed over her too after the Fleet submarine successfully dived for the first time.

The hunter-killer did not even have to leave the security of the dock where she is being built for the crucial two-day test.

Instead, she was towed over a 25-metre-deep (82ft) 'dive hole' long enough and wide enough to accommodate her – and almost deep enough to completely submerge the submarine.

It was however deep enough to test what needed to be tested.

A crew of 60 – just under half of them RN submariners, the rest BAE engineers – was aboard for the immersion to check whether all the pressure seals and hatches closed properly and to blow 250 tonnes of water from the forward tanks.

"This is the next major milestone for the submarine following the extremely successful launch day in early June," said Cdr Mike Walliker, Astute's CO, who was aboard his boat for these crucial tests.

"No stone is ever left unturned when it comes to submarine safety and I am delighted with all that Astute has achieved in this comprehensive underwater test.

"I am very proud to say that we are all contributing to bringing into service the finest submarine that the Royal Navy has ever built."

Key to the trials were ensuring Astute's trim and tilt were accurate by rolling the boat.

Accurate measurements were taken while the tests were conducted.

And while Astute is crammed with technological wizardry which makes her the world's most advanced submarine, it took a nod to the ancient Egyptians to measure tilt and trim.

A plumb line suspended on wire ran through three decks with its

pendulum bob immersed in a bath of oil to prevent it swinging wildly (it's a method not dissimilar to one used by the Egyptians building the Pyramids four and a half millennia ago).

The boat is now back inside the vast Devonshire Boat Hall at Barrow where she was born and where her sisters Ambush, Artful and Audacious are taking shape.

Fitting out will continue until spring 2008 when Astute returns to the water.

Meanwhile, in a galaxy far, far away (well, Dartmouth, in fact)...

Astute now has a hound named after her, upholding a 129-year tradition – particularly fitting given the ship's badge featuring a hunting dog with prey in its mouth (the boat also has a guide dog named in her honour).

The Britannia Beagles date back to 1878 when a Lt Guy Mainwaring founded a pack while he was serving in cadet ship HMS Britannia, moored in the Dart.

(Actually, the first hound was a terrier, Jim, whose gravestone can still be seen today by the Sandquay steps.)

The tradition was continued when Britannia became a stone frigate 102 years ago and is maintained to this day thanks to masters Admiral Sir James Eberle and former clearance diver David Bateman.

Cdr Walliker and his family officially named the pup which, like the boat, has a fine pedigree (her 'dad' was champion hound at the West of England Hound Show last year).

Other beagles in the pack bear suitable RN names (although many of their namesake ships no longer fly the White Ensign): Splendid, Sceptre, Hermes, Victory, Richmond, Antrim, Active, Arrow, Amazon, Achilles, Apollo, Brecon, Brazen, Trafalgar and Bulwark (Astute's sire).

● The waters of the basin at Barrow wash off the hull of HMS Astute as she emerges from her first test dive
Picture: Chris Nelson/BAE Systems



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BZ for Brian

A TRIPTYCH of books earned one of Britain's foremost naval historians the coveted maritime 'Oscar'.

Prof Brian Lavery, an expert on the RN in days of sail and steam, collected the Desmond Wettren Media Award from Countess Mountbatten of Burma at a ceremony attended by leaders of the Navy past and present and its many supporters.

Prof Lavery is a long-standing author on nautical subjects as well as curator emeritus of ship technology at the National Maritime Museum.

He was singled out amid tough competition for three books which appeared in the space of a year: *Churchill's Navy, Shield of Empire* – a history of the Royal Navy north of the border – and *River-Class Frigates and the Battle of the Atlantic*.

The finest single work of maritime literature this past 12 months was deemed to be Andrew Welch's in-depth study of the clash with Iceland over fishing rights – *The Royal Navy in the Cod Wars* – earning him the Mountbatten Maritime Literary Prize.

A high-quality series of documentaries, *Deep Wreck Mysteries*, stood out among a raft of impressive television shows, winning the programme's producer Crispin Sadler the Crystal Dolphin Trophy.

As this was likely to be the last Wettren awards in their present format, new Commander-in-Chief Fleet Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope presented a series of 'special recognition awards' for long-time champions of the work of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines or Merchant Navy.

Recognised were: Iain Ballantyne, editor of *Warships International Fleet Review*; Mike Critchley, publisher of *Warship World* and head of Maritime Books; author and historian Prof Andrew Lambert of King's College London; Andrew Linnington, of seafarers' union Nautilus UK; and *Navy News* assistant editor Richard Hargreaves.

The awards, held aboard the Silver Sturgeon on the River Thames, are named in honour of *Daily Telegraph* journalist and Royal Naval Reservist Desmond Wettren, Fleet Street's last naval correspondent, and are organised by his widow Gillian and the Maritime Foundation.

They were instigated to celebrate maritime journalism and to champion the role of the sea in British life today.

"Our economic prosperity is linked to the sea and – surrounded by it as we are – we are dependent on the Royal Navy to maintain the security of our trade routes," Countess Mountbatten told the 180 guests at the ceremony.



● Practice for a boarding operation with the Lynx on the back of frigate HMS Argyll, and (below) a seaboat sets out on a patrol in the northern Arabian Gulf

AS the sun rises and sets over the waters of the Arabian Gulf, the Royal Navy and its allies maintain a steady watch on the platforms that keep the oil income flowing into the economy of Iraq.

The OPLATs – the shorthand term for the Khawr al Amayah and Al Basrah oil terminals – have been a familiar sight to members of the Royal Navy for the last decade.

And while HMS Richmond bowed out of her duties around the oil platforms as November began, it is HMS Argyll who now watches over these looming structures.

Under the heading of Combined Task Force 158, the RN ship is working alongside the US Navy, US Coast Guard and Australian Navy to guard the OPLATs which just happen to be situated in the centre of one of the busiest and most lucrative fishing grounds in the Gulf...

It can produce a somewhat intricate surface picture watching over the 50-plus small skiffs and large dhows that cluster within a three-mile radius of the precious platforms.

And precious is the word, as the fuel that is pumped through the OPLATs accounts for up to 90 per cent of Iraq's gross domestic product.

Each skiff, dhow or craft that breaches the 2,000m exclusion zone has to be investigated, with interaction patrols (IPATs) and boarding operations a regular feature of life for those in the area.

But the sailors work hard at building up friendly relations with the local fishermen and merchant mariners through routine patrols.

However vigilance remains key for the units in the area as the oil platforms and the wealth they produce remain a target for terrorists keen to disrupt the good work in the area.

The fledgling Iraqi Navy are central to this: the units from CTF 158 are ably assisted by Iraqi Patrol Craft, and Iraqi Marines work with the RN and Royal Marines during boarding operations and training.

The routines for responding to possible attacks on the OPLATs are regularly put into practice, although usually for nothing more sinister than a lost fishing boat.

However there are other unexpected challenges that come the Navy's way on this watch.

During the first few days on patrol, Argyll was called upon to provide expert medical help to an injured US Coast Guard sailor.

First-aider Logs(CS) Chris Gatcum and the frigate's medical officer Surg Lt Aaron Calvin travelled by seaboat to the US Coast Guard Cutter Maui to help PO2 Robert Rusko USCG.

Initial treatment on the US vessel was followed by a night on board the British frigate before PO Rusko was taken ashore to a local hospital.

So despite the familiar surroundings, the unexpected is a constant presence in these waters.

Cdr Piers Hurrell, commanding officer of HMS Richmond, said: "It has been a particularly busy and rewarding period for the ship's company.

"Our challenge has been to remain in a ready state to deal with any number of situations at very short notice.

"By training the Iraqi Navy in key OPLAT defence skills and boarding techniques, my team are helping to create the right conditions so that Iraqi self-determination in the maritime sphere can succeed."

Argyll has now taken over this busy programme of work.

The ship's company are working in defence watches – six hours on, six hours off for most of the crew – so that the ship is ready to respond to any situation at any time of day or night.

HMS Richmond is expected home to Portsmouth just before Christmas, while Argyll will remain on station until spring next year.

odbye, hello



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Crate expectations for Fleet Air Arm

IS IT a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a big metal box for helicopter spare parts.

Slung beneath Merlins in Cornish skies in recent months has been a new piece of kit to make front-line flying considerably more efficient.

Each time a Merlin or Sea King deploys it is expected to take 2,000 different spare parts – weighing about seven tonnes in all. Unfortunately the packs used to transport the kit – Chacons, or 'Chatham containers' – were difficult to pack, difficult to store and prone to a battering from the

elements.

In 2005 alone £300,000 of helicopter spares were written off after being damaged in transit. Not surprisingly, the Fleet Air Arm wanted something better.

In fact, it wanted something which could be slung under a Merlin or Sea King, hold up to 2.2 tonnes of kit, be reduced to a flat-pack when not in use, protect parts from the elements with a cover (emblazoned with the RN logo if necessary), take up almost a third less space than its predecessor and be quicker and easier to use

(they forgot the moon on a stick – Ed).

Somerset-based Mobile Shelter Solutions managed to fulfil all these criteria with their 'transport frame'.

Those frames underwent extensive tests at Culdrose, where a team from the Joint Air Transport Evaluation Unit was happy that the crates could carry two-tonne payloads underneath Merlins at speeds up to 80kts.

Suitably tested, these flat-pack frames are now being used by front-line Merlin squadrons on operations at sea.



In the land of the Pharos

A CRUISE liner running aground in a cold, unforgiving environment?

What are the chances of that happening?

Well, sadly, quite high – as HMS Endurance found 12 months ago.

And so it was that destroyer HMS Southamton (who prefers to be known not as The Saint but the 'Mighty Ninety' after her pennant number) led a major exercise in South Georgia to test the ability of local forces and emergency services to cope with a large-scale accident.

Endurance responded swiftly and effectively last year when the cruise ship Nordkapp was holed on a visit to Deception Island. Crew and passengers were evacuated from the vessel which spilled oil into an extremely sensitive maritime environment.

Exercise Cape Reach mimicked much of the Nordkapp incident, and threw in some additional challenges.

Playing the part of the stricken cruise ship was the fishery protection vessel Pharos SG carrying 180 tourists.

She had just dropped off a party hoping to hike across the Thatcher Peninsula and was sailing around to meet them when her engines failed and she was blown on to rocks near Grytviken.

Some passengers decided there and then to abandon ship, jumping into the icy water and wading ashore to await rescue on the rocky coast, the rest remained on the crippled ship.

As luck would have it Southamton and her escorting tanker RFA Gold Rover were on patrol in the area... and the destroyer was bolstered by the presence of Falklands-based infantry



and the local commander Brig Nick Davies aboard to oversee the rescue mission.

While Southamton's Lynx winched the passengers to safety and the ship's medical team treated casualties, the soldiers set off in search of the tourists on Thatcher Peninsula who just happened to get lost (*it never rains... – Ed*).

Looking after so many casualties is nevertheless demanding – and with no airfield on South Georgia, extra supplies had to be parachuted in by a Hercules from the Falklands (demanding a 1,500-mile round trip).

Oh, and did we mention there was an oil slick to contend with?

"It's been an extremely complex, difficult and demanding exercise carried out in the most severe weather conditions possible," said Southamton's CO Cdr Richard Morris.

"Without the personal determination, endurance and professionalism of each and every man and woman on board, we would not have achieved the success that we did."

Once Cape Reach was over, the Mighty Ninety's sailors headed ashore for activities tranquil (a visit to the abandoned whaling station, a trek to Shackleton's grave, the obligatory queue in the post office to receive a stamp in the passport) and activities not-so-tranquil (snowboarding and kayaking).

And where better to present the Grytviken Trophy (for efficiency in naval gunfire support) than overlooking the namesake town.

After four days in South Georgia the destroyer and tanker headed for the Falklands, before Southamton bade farewell to the islands and headed for the west coast of Africa to begin the long journey home.

The Mighty Ninety's nine-month deployment ends when she returns to Portsmouth this month.

● Southampton ploughs through the rough Atlantic on final approach to a replenishment at sea with Gold Rover

Pictures: LA(Phot) Chris Winter, FRPU Drake



Fawkes for good

HOW do you celebrate Guy Fawkes night minus (a) bonfire and (b) fireworks?

Ask HMS Campbeltown, who managed to enjoy November 5 without both its traditional accompaniments.

Actually, that's not strictly true.

There was a bonfire aboard the Type 22 frigate, currently on terrorist-busting duties east of Suez.

It probably didn't give off too much heat (made of crêpe paper as it was) but it did perhaps warm the spirits of the ship's company.

It fell to the female mess aboard to host Fawkes festivities (which bore more than a passing resemblance to Halloween with apple bobbing and toffee apples, accompanied by blaring stereo and the ubiquitous barbecue).

Anyway, when not upholding British customs, Campbeltown has been enforcing the rules of the sea under Operation Calash.

Calash is just one strand of the global maritime security mission, covering the Red and Arabian Seas and the Gulf of Aden.

And that's a big area. (I would guess about two million square miles of sea bordered by a coastline 6,500 miles long in 14 nations – Ed.)

It's also an area riven by unrest, piracy, smuggling (chiefly guns and drugs) and terrorist activities. And it's an area through which half the world's oil passes in tankers.

As a result, Campbeltown's boarding party has been pretty active.

"They reassure local mariners that we are here to help and glean any information they may have on any illegal activities which may be occurring," said CO Cdr Gordon Abernethy.

A new illegal activity to contend with in this region is people trafficking.

Gangs have exploited the political and tribal chaos in Somalia by offering to transport their countryfolk to safety... for a price.

The boats they use are frequently unseaworthy with many of the Somalis drowning in their bid for a better life.

Of course, Campbeltown is not alone in this wide-ranging mission.

Apart from other Allied warships in the region, the frigate has been working closely with Yemen's Coastguard.

Four Yemeni officers joined Campbeltown to share their knowledge of the coast, local maritime activities and local customs – and proved invaluable as interpreters during boarding operations.

One wonders what the Yemeni visitors would have made of one of the RN's more unusual customs (admittedly a very new one) had they observed fancy dress flight deck dodgeball.

Parading on the frigate's flight deck were the Campbeltown Clowns, the Clubswingers, a bunch of bikini'd beauties (unfortunately from a male mess...), and the wardroom dressed in garish shirts (so their normal run ashore attire, then – Ed).

The honours went to the Mis-fits – apparently comprising G-Unit, Popeye, Spiderman and an angel.

They left the 'field of battle' with a crate of Fosters (now just a crate – Ed).

● Silver surfer... Campbeltown glides through a shimmering Mediterranean during the opening stages of her 7½-month deployment east of Suez

Picture: LA(Phot) Pete Smith, FRPU Whale Island



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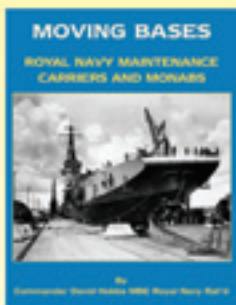
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● 'Yes, Royal, we normally dress like this in the Fleet...' the NaTT lads enter into the spirit of Trafalgar Night

21 Oct party people

HOW many sailors does it take to hold a party?

Probably just two, so seven will certainly suffice.

But the seven British sailors attached to the UN peacekeeping force in **Kosovo** were determined that the two proudest nights in RN tradition were introduced to a wider audience.

The septet – Lts Tom Dickens and Tom Edwards, WO Martin Purchase, CPOs 'Audi' Quantrill and Daz Nicholls, PO Gary Stevens and LREG Carl Hallinon – decided to merge Trafalgar Night (typically the preserve of officers) and Pickle Night (typically the preserve of ratings) for a bumper October 21 evening.

Seventy international guests were invited to Camp Slim Lines on the edge of Kosovo's capital Pristina for an evening steeped in RN lore.

There was Colours to kick off the evening (no RM band in person, but a CD pumped out via a ghettoblaster did the trick), then it was inside the dining room, suitably adorned with bunting, nautical paintings and flags (apparently including some provided by *Navy News*).

There could only be one main course: Beef Wellington (paraded in with full naval panoply) and there could only be one way to close festivities: a glass of port, while a naval auction raised £500 for Seafarers UK.

The 'magnificent seven' believe this is the first Trafalgar Night staged at Slim Lines – and it was certainly the first taste of this legendary RN dinner for many of their guests.

As for the peacekeeping mission, the Royal Navy's input to Operation Oculus is now in its eighth year.

Another small(ish) RN contingent sometimes perhaps forgotten about by the wider Senior Service community went to even greater lengths to celebrate October 21.

In fact the RN and RM personnel with the Naval Transition Team, training the Iraqi Navy and Marines at **Umm Qasr**, had two anniversaries to celebrate, much to the amusement (and possibly bemusement) of US sailors, marines and coast guards.

Despite their base being a proverbial stone's throw from the Kuwaiti border, ordering the food for Trafalgar Night was a bit of a rigmarole.

Stilton had to be imported via Kuwait (and a boat transfer) while much planning was needed to ensure the chocolate did not melt.

It didn't, for ten ships of the line were crafted by the chefs. They were devoured only after Lt Cdrs Matt Payne and Toby Norman and Lt Rob Wickham had guided diners through the intricacies of Trafalgar in a mini-reenactment of the battle (complete with pyrotechnics and cannon fire).

Exactly seven days later, it was the Royals turn to rule the roost as they celebrated the 343rd birthday of the Corps.

This was a rather more poignant affair. After an afternoon of sport and high-spirits, the dinner ended with the lighting of candles in memory of absent friends – especially relevant as many of the commandos had either just returned from Afghanistan or were about to deploy there.

A Grand celebration



THERE'S never a national TV company around when you want one.

Except in Malta.

As sailors formed the numbers '6' and '0' on the flight deck of HMS Chatham to celebrate the diamond wedding of the Queen and Prince Philip in Malta's Grand Harbour – pictured above – a GMTV camera crew happened to be wandering past.

Several minutes later the Type 22 frigate

found herself featuring on the breakfast television show.

It was all the more remarkable as the commemoration by the ship's company was a bit of a 'spur of the moment' idea to coincide with the Royal couple's anniversary and visit to the Mediterranean.

The earlier years of the Princess Elizabeth's and Lt Philip Mountbatten's married life were spent in Malta – hence their return to

the Commonwealth country last month to mark 60 years together.

"The idea came from a couple of members of the ship's company – we thought it would be wonderful to mark the anniversary in this way," said Chatham's CO Cdr Martin Connell.

"The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh were able to see the ship from where they were staying."

Grave responsibility

HAD they succeeded the fates of Britain, Canada and the United States might have been very different.

But they failed and the British victims of the Battle of Plattsburgh lie forgotten beneath the undergrowth and wilderness of an obscure island in the middle of a huge lake.

The War of 1812 (which actually dragged on until 1815) saw Britain and the United States lock horns when the latter took offence to the Royal Navy's stranglehold on trade and Whitehall's support for American Indians.

The war was stuck in relative stalemate in the early autumn of 1814 when more than 11,000 British troops struck south for the heart of New York state.

By the second week of September the force had occupied the town of Plattsburgh on Lake Champlain, a huge natural waterway straddling the border of the USA and Canada.

There the Brits halted, their progress thwarted by poor supply routes, American defences and a US fleet in charge of the lake.

The commander of expedition, General George Prevost, demanded the Royal Navy come to his aid.

It did in the shape of Capt George Downie's squadron, led by the brand-new frigate HMS Confiance. So new was she that she was barely fit for action.

Mid-morning on September 11 1814 – after the Brits had breakfasted heartily – the two fleets clashed off Plattsburgh.

As battles go, it was particularly ferocious. Downie was killed within the first 15 minutes of action (but not before Confiance had killed 40 sailors on the US flagship Saratoga with her opening broadside).

For almost three hours the battle raged. "Never was a shower of hail so thick as the shot whistling about our ears," recalled one midshipman aboard Confiance. A Royal Marine, veteran of Trafalgar, proclaimed the 1805 battle "a mere flea bite" compared with the carnage off Plattsburgh.

It was all over by lunchtime. The Americans triumphed. The British



● A contemporary American painting celebrating victory at Plattsburgh and (below) an engraving of a commemorative coin struck across the Pond

flotilla was captured. At least 140 men on both sides had made the ultimate sacrifice.

The great naval strategist Alfred Mahan called the Battle of Plattsburgh the one 'decisive' clash of the War of 1812. The invading army fell back to Canadian soil and within months Britain and the USA had signed a peace treaty.

The ferocity of the battle on the lake contrasted sharply with its aftermath, when humanity after victory was indeed the predominant feature.

Officers of both sides were buried with full military honours, their graves marked by plaques and headstones.

Ratings too were buried side-by-side on a 40-acre island in the

middle of the lake.

And that brings our story up to date.

Two centuries after this decisive battle former merchant sailor and psychiatric nurse Laurie Beakes visited the site of the clash – and was horrified by what he found.

No-one knows where on Crab Island the victims of the battle are buried; the mass grave lies hidden beneath 200 years of undergrowth. Save for a monument erected a century after the fighting, it would be impossible to tell a decisive struggle once raged here.

The 60-year-old from Portsmouth admits that he too knew nothing of the battle until a search for relatives led them to family in Plattsburgh... who

just happened to be 1812 history buffs.

They are doing their best to raise the profile of the American dead, but aside from formal representation most years from a military attaché in Washington, Britain's part in the battle is largely forgotten.

"The Americans feel very strongly that we should honour our dead – ideally they would like to put up plaque and a memorial to formally mark the battle and those killed," said Mr Beakes.

"If you have sailed 3,000 miles to fight a battle, then I think it is only right that we honour these men who died for something they believed in."

"I'll be honest. Until last year I didn't have a clue about this battle."

"But now I do – and I wasn't prepared for the horror that I saw when I visited Crab Island. You wouldn't know there was a mass grave down there."

If you are interested in supporting Mr Beakes' campaign, he can be contacted at 198 Kirby Road, North End, Portsmouth.

■ ALSO in the realm of Anglo-American friendship, members of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company were on board HMS Victory to make a special presentation.

The American flag which fluttered on the USS Constitution on Nelson's birthday, September 29, was handed over to Victory's CO Lt Cdr John Scivier.

The Constitution is a contemporary of the Victory (she is a frigate, however, rather than a ship of the line) and like Nelson's flagship, she is still in commission. Unlike Victory, however, Constitution still puts to sea occasionally.

In return for the gift from our American cousins, Lt Cdr Scivier handed over the White Ensign raised on Victory on July 4 when he visited Boston and the Constitution to discuss how best to care for such great ships.

"We've come a long way from the turbulent and confrontational period in the early 19th Century when these two ships were fighting for opposing navies," he said. "From those times, we've become firm friends and strong allies."

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Class: Type 23 frigate
Pennant number: F239
Builder: Swan Hunters shipbuilders, Tyne
Launched: April 6 1993
Commissioned: June 1995
Displacement: 3,500 tonnes
Length: 133 metres
Beam: 16.2 metres
Draught: 7 metres
Complement: 178 plus 38 squadded ashore
Propulsion: Two CODLAG – Combined Diesel, Electric and Gas turbine engines
Sensors: Radar 996 – long-range 3D surveillance; radar 1007 – high-definition navigation radar; radar 1008 – ship safety; sonar 2050 – omnidirectional, hull-mounted active sonar; sonar 2087 – variable depth sonar; sonar 2170 – surface ship torpedo defence; UAT – passive surveillance; GPEOD – general purpose electro-optical director used for the 4.5in gun; AIS – automatic identification system
Armament: Seawolf; Harpoon; 4.5in Mk8 Mod 1 gun; two 30mm guns; Seagat; magazine torpedo launch system
Helicopter: Merlin HM1

Battle Honours
Facts and figures

Home for Christmas

AS Father Christmas comes to call, frigate HMS Richmond returns home from her eight-month deployment 'East of Suez' as military phraseology has it.

Initially the deployment saw the Type 23 operating off Africa on Operation Calash, working on the ubiquitous maritime security operations and aiding the fight against piracy in the seas around Africa.

Working with the Silent Service, Richmond and Sceptre ran through some testing routines to trial the capabilities of the Sonar 2087.

Onwards and upwards and Richmond headed into the northern Arabian Gulf on Op Telic, taking over from sister frigate HMS Cornwall on oil platform protection duties.

After four extended patrols around the structures that pipe forth the valuable oil that is the lifeline for Iraq's economic future, Richmond conceded her guardship hat to the next incumbent, HMS Argyll, in November.

A gilded goodbye saw the frigate conduct a formal visit to Ras Al Khaimah when they hosted Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi, the first visit to the Emirate by a Royal Navy warship in two years.

A final brief stint on Op Calash is the last act in the warship's long deployment before the welcoming lights of Portsmouth call her home in the wintry days of December.

After a few months respite, the frigate will once more don her testing hat, heading to the underwater ranges off the Eastern Seaboard of

the US for further anti-submarine warfare trials.

The type 23 is the eight generation of Richmond to serve with the Royal Navy, a history dating back to a 26-gun warship of 1656 (although under the initial name of Wakefield).

An eight-gun yacht was the next incarnation, before a French frigate Dauphin was captured and renamed in 1745, and spent the next five years serving in the Leeward Island Squadron.

Hence the name passed on to a 32-gun fifth rate, built in Deptford in 1757.

It was this Richmond that won the name its first two battle honours; as part of the St Lawrence campaigns, capturing Quebec, then the capture of Havana three years later. A role in the American War of Independence was followed by capture by the French in 1781.

Next on the history books was a 14-gun brig of 1806-1814.

The name took a break (other than a brief stint on a World War 1 trawler) until 1940 when the US destroyer Fairfax was transferred into the wartime Navy under a lease agreement, with the veteran destroyer arriving in Plymouth on the very last day of 1940.

The (now) Town-class destroyer took up convoy duties in the Atlantic and Arctic. A spell in the Royal Canadian Navy was followed by a place in the reserve list on the Tyne.

In July 1944 she was transferred into the Russian Navy under the name Zhivuchi, where she served until 1949.



● HMS Richmond in the northern Arabian Gulf
Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Wenham

HEROES OF THE ROYAL NAVY No.44

Cdr Tom Triggs and AB William Becker AM

IN THE great port of Halifax, gateway to Nova Scotia and western Canada, life was good.

For most Haligonians the global conflagration had brought prosperity to their city. The harbour swelled with ships mustering for convoys from the New World to the Old.

The casualty lists in the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, giving voice to the death toll at Passchendaele, and women wandering through the streets in black were a visible sign of the war. But otherwise conflict had largely passed Halifax by.

All that changed on the morning of Thursday, December 6, 1917.

At dawn the torpedo defences in the harbour were lowered and trade at sea resumed.

The freighter Mont Blanc, packed with more than 2,500 tons of explosives, was anxious to dock.

The merchantman Imo was keen to get under way for New York to pick up supplies for Belgian civilians.

In the Narrows, the straits linking the inner basin with the outer harbour, the two ships' fates collided.

Misunderstanding and poor seamanship left the Imo's prow embedded in the bow of the Mont Blanc. The clash of steel upon steel sent sparks flying across the deck, igniting benzol and picric acid.

Within minutes the fire on the Mont Blanc was out of control. The 40-man French crew headed for the lifeboats and rowed ashore, running through the streets screaming about impending doom.

A mile or so from the blazing hulk of the Mont Blanc, cruiser HMS Highflyer immediately dispatched a whaler with seven men led by Cdr Tom Triggs from Southsea to assist.

There was little they could do to stop the fire on the French ship, they found when they arrived on the scene, but Triggs decided he could save the Imo and began marshalling a tug to haul her to safety.

Triggs and his six shipmates began hauling the whaler towards the Imo, carrying a tow line. They stopped at 9.04am and 35 seconds.

For at that instant, the Mont Blanc vaporised.

No man-made explosion in the pre-nuclear age was ever greater.

A fireball more than a mile high rose where the

ship had been. Fragments of Mont Blanc rained down on Halifax and the suburb of Dartmouth, including a gun barrel blasted more than three miles and a shaft of the anchor weighing half a ton carried over two miles.

Windows became shards of lethal glass. Homes burned. A tidal wave 60ft high raced through the harbour, sucking stunned survivors into the icy water and tossing the Imo on to the Dartmouth shore.

In an instant, 1,600 lives were wiped out, including six of the seven British sailors in the whaler. Only 26-year-old Yorkshireman AB William Becker survived. He swam to the Dartmouth side of the harbour where Canadians plucked him out.

Both he and Cdr Triggs were subsequently honoured with the Albert Medal in gold. "They were fully aware of the desperate nature of the work they were engaged in," their citation read. "By their devotion to duty they sacrificed their lives in the endeavour to save the lives of others."



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● Returning fire I... rounds roar out of a 81mm mortar as Charlie Company return fire during a Taleban rocket attack on their base near Kajaki



Fire

IN THE dead of the Afghan night, a mortar belches fire and steel.

Seconds earlier rockets had smashed into the forward outpost of Charlie Company, 40 Commando, near the village of Kajaki in north-east Helmand.

A fire team reponds in an instant, taking cover as its 81mm mortar unleashes a hail of death and destruction.

It's all in a day's work for the green berets in Afghanistan.

The men of 40 Commando are scattered across Helmand province, the sharpest blade of 52 Infantry Brigade – Britain's commitment to the international peacekeeping effort in this war-torn land.

To the south of Kajaki, the lads of Bravo are safeguarding the district centre of Sangin.

A year ago, Sangin was the scene of bitter clashes between commandos and insurgents, culminating in two months of fighting in March and

April which finally wrested control of the town and environs from the Taleban.

Where once terror thrived, today it is trade.

Sangin used to lie on one of the key supply routes for the Taleban's drug and arms trade, but since the Royals strangled that lifeline in the spring, more regular business has resumed in the town.

The fundamentalists were driven out of Sangin by the Royals before the Royal Anglians replaced them to maintain the security situation.

Now the green berets have returned, the once silent streets buzz with the noise of Sangin's daily bazaar.

But that does not mean that the enemy is not here. Outside the town, the Taleban make their odious presence felt, putting pressure on locals not to support and work with



the Allied peacemakers.

To put the kibosh on such activities, Bravo Company patrols daily alongside Afghan soldiers and police.

Two units – 5 and 6 Troop – push through the suburbs and into the fields of maize which surround Sangin, while their comrades in 4 Troop provide a reassuring presence in the town centre and around the market.

But as soon as contact is made with the Taleban, the three forces converge. It became clear as the commandos patrolled through the fields that their movements were being observed by the insurgents.

The gravest threat the green berets face is the 'improvised explosive device' – a bomb, be it a suicide bomb, roadside explosive or booby trap.

For that reason anyone suspicious is stopped a good distance from the

● Returning fire II... (Below) A commando engages Taleban forces with a .50 calibre heavy machine-gun high above the Helmand valley and (left) a Royal pauses briefly during a search of a former insurgent stronghold





for effect

● Delta force... Delta Company 40 Commando scour the Helmand steppe near Now Zad as the sun rises

patrols before a sniffer dog is brought up to check whether the person has been in contact with explosives.

During the sweep around Sangin, one motorcyclist and a local were allowed to go on their way, but after the dog became suspicious of a third man, tests revealed he had been working with explosives as there was residue on his skin.

Such patrols are being pushed further and further into the Sangin countryside.

Intelligence reports suggest that the further the Royals push, the more the enemy falls back – after last winter’s deployment by 3 Commando Brigade, the Taliban have decided not to grapple the Royals face-to-face.

“At times it can be frustrating for the lads as the enemy are not willing to get too near us,” said Capt Tom Quinn RM, in charge of 5 Troop.

“But in Sangin this is a sign of how far we have come. It would be wrong to take the current threat lightly.

“Our presence is not only about taking the fight to the enemy but also about building relationships with the locals that will see us counter any attempts by the Taliban to disrupt reconstruction.”

Side-by-side with combat sweeps comes the ‘hearts and minds’ aspect of the British presence in Helmand.

Several commandos are attached to CIMIC – a Civilian and Military Co-operation team – which works on a number of community projects, most notably building the first school in Sangin in years.

“Sangin is seen as a template for what we aim to achieve in Helmand. The improved security situation is only the first step,” said Lt Col Stuart Birrell, 40 Cdo’s CO.

“We must now begin to focus on how we can help the Afghan authorities establish sound rule. That’s the key to

further progress.”

Some 25 miles to the northwest of Sangin, Delta Company are setting their stall out in the town of Now Zad.

While much of Britain’s efforts have been focused on Sangin, Now Zad has been somewhat neglected.

Like Sangin, it’s part of the Taliban’s drugs and illegal arms network and despite a compound built for Allied forces 12 months ago, the insurgents have attempted to reassert their influence on Now Zad.

It is Delta Company’s task to put a stop to any possible Taliban renaissance, beginning with regular patrols and sweeps through the town almost identical to the missions conducted in Sangin.

“We’ve laid down our cards from the start,” said Lt Col Birrell.

“We’re here to make a difference. Our achievements will be measured by how we improve the lives of ordinary Afghans.”

● Naval wings over Afghanistan, page 3



● Convoy duties... (Right) Delta Company to Now Zad after a patrol and (below) eternal vigilance... A Delta Company green beret keeps watch in a ‘sanger’ bunker





A FORCE FOR GOOD



● LWEA John 'Wiggy' Bennett after the Jungle Marathon

Deep in the jungle

SUBMARINER LWEA John 'Wiggy' Bennett was the first Brit across the finishing line in the Brazilian Jungle Marathon.

Finishing in provisional eighth place overall, the Raleigh-based submariner completed the 200km foot-race in roughly 51 hours, raising money for the Arthritis Research Campaign.

Wiggy ran along existing paths, trails and tracks through the Brazilian rainforest, crossing streams and rivers along his route.

Run in six stages, during the day and overnight, each of the marathon runners had to be self-sufficient, carrying their own food

and provisions, and setting up their own hammock campsites along the shores of the Tapajos River.

Wiggy said: "Being in the jungle was living a childhood dream, but while I was there I learnt a lot about myself, and in particular how much pain, exhaustion and tiredness I could put myself through."

"Coming face to face with a jaguar in the middle of the night-stage was certainly an experience."

The submariner has now been bitten by the extreme racing bug with further big challenges ahead.

Sponsor Wiggy online at www.justgiving.com/crazywiggy.



● Saddles are a very serious business...

Sore saddle leads to murder plot

SERIAL cyclist that he is, Capt Tim Gray RM has coerced another bunch of willing colleagues on to their bicycles to raise £2,700 for charities Seafarers UK, the RAF Benevolent Fund and Grantham-based Gift Hospice.

Now based at the Defence Elementary Flying Training School near RAF Cranwell, the Royal Marine persuaded a mixture of RM, RN, RAF and civilians that cycling the 425 miles from RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall back to Cranwell in Lincolnshire was a good idea.

Although some of the nine were seasoned veterans of the cycling habit, there were a few novices who were yet to be inducted into the weariness of the long-distance cyclist.

The route was planned by Flt Lt Dan Bayliss who, according to Capt Ross Drinkwater RM, "did an impressive job by joining the dots between every hill en route for us to enjoy throughout the week."

Ross said: "We gathered in front of RNAS Culdrose on the Monday in fine spirits, sporting an array of spandex, energy drinks and ultra-light wallet-busting bicycles."

"However, not convinced by such gimmickry, Flt Lt 'Charlie' Brown opted to ride a penny-farthing era contraption. Although the wicker basket had been removed, it seemed to fall apart at speeds over 25mph."

The first day's enjoyable cycling took the team through Bodmin Moor to North Devon, with a spartan night in the comfort of Fremington Battle Camp.

Ross continued: "The next day dawned bright and sunny – unlike the riders. With slightly stiff legs, we got on our way for our day of 'fun' pushing east."

"Exmoor's hills were a 'gentle' warmer getting us

ready to cross the Mendip Hills later in the day.

"A brief lunch was enjoyed in Glastonbury, but the horror of the Wells TV-mast hill had loomed in the distance for 20 miles and we knew that the climb up was going to be hideous."

After a night at Colerne Barracks, the cyclists were too busy with aching limbs and saddle sores to celebrate the halfway point.

"Day three started with very few people able to sit in their saddles for the first five miles. Our bruised backsides and even stiffer legs were making their mark as the group tottered off with two riders, including myself, knocking back the painkillers," said Ross.

"Knees and tendons had started to grumble at being used for six hours plus a day, something that rarely happens in the flying world!"

The cyclists spent their final night on the road at RAF Cosford, before the final morning dawned.

"With the end in sight, a number of cyclists in the group looked like hopping frogs due to unsightly saddle sores," said Ross.

"I personally spent most of the morning plotting the death of the man in the bike shop who had assured me that the narrowest saddle with no cushioning was the best for long distance riding."

"Nonsense."

The Royal Marine admitted a certain sense of relief on arrival at their RAF Cranwell destination on time and without accident.

He concluded: "Looking back I recommend to anyone the benefits of long-distance cycling as a social method of burning calories and developing fitness."

"Coupled with some decent weather, cycling provides an excellent way to enjoy the English countryside..."

"Just ensure you go for the big saddle."

Twenty-four three

SAILORS from Fareham training establishment HMS Collingwood donned their walking boots to tackle the Three Peaks Challenge.

In just 24 hours the 19 sailors scaled the three highest peaks in the UK – Ben Nevis in Scotland, Scafell Pike in the Lake District and Mount Snowdon in Wales.

The walk was in aid of the Foundation for the Study of Infant Death, in memory of one of the team's son.

Lt Nobby Hall said: "Our spirits were high, but by Scafell Pike it was four in the morning and we were flagging."

"When we climbed Snowdon it was bright sunshine, we were all exhausted but we remembered why we were doing it and dug our feet in."

"We completed the challenge with nine minutes to spare."



news in brief

■ **WO ANDY** Rainey's self-designed pin badges have gone on sale for the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust, and within three weeks garnered more than £500 for the Naval charity.

The money will go to support Pembroke House, the RNBT's residential and nursing home.

The warrant officer from HMS Raleigh, who will soon become the Command Warrant Officer to the Second Sea Lord, presented the money to the charity at their annual general meeting at HMS Collingwood.

■ **THE Waterfront Logistics** Support group in Portsmouth naval base, inspired by LLogs Claire Sheasby, came over all pink to raise money for Breast Cancer Awareness.

Office manager POLogs(SC) Nicola Wilson said: "We thought let's have a day out of uniform, get a bit dressed up in pink, and do our bit. Nice to see the guys in pink too."

"Our organisation plays a big part in the accounting of the minor war vessels in Portsmouth, and with lots of visitors each day we have a donation box at the reception desk."

■ **A BRITISH** Summer Fete offering fish and chips, Cornish pasties and English ales was an unusual sight in Belgium, and the UKSU SHAPE event raised over £4,500 for military charities RN Benevolent Fund, RAF Benevolent Fund, the Army Benevolent Fund and the local orphanage in Mons.

Capt Tom McBarnett of the RNBF said: "With our operational tempo nowadays I think we are all beholden to support our service charities, and the SHAPE staff have done a tremendous amount of fundraising through the year."

■ **CAR enthusiasts** John and Karen Brown completed the Cannonball 8000 car rally from London to Zagreb, raising £700 for the Royal Marines Museum in Southsea.

The driving duo specially garbed their Porsche in a suitably military theme for the weekend's racing.

■ **FASLANE'S** POMA David Meechan ran a practical session in first aid at the Families Centre in Helensburgh's Churchill Square.

Mums from the Chill Out Group were taught basic resuscitation by the medical assistant.

He said: "All the mums have been great. They really throw themselves into it and are quick to learn."

"Obviously you hope you never have to use these skills for real, but at least if the situation did arise, they'd know what to do."

■ **RUNNER** Marc Craig of Devonport Naval Base competed in the Great North Run for the first time and raised £500 for Marie Curie Cancer Care.

■ **A NEW** care home is being built in Solihull by the Royal Star and Garter, whose chairman Vice Admiral Sir John Dunt and vice president Simon Weston conducted a 'topping out' ceremony to mark the highest point of the new building.

The home will extend the service that it offers to members of the Forces and their families who are physically disabled or incapacitated.

■ **DURING** a visit to Falmouth, survey ship HMS Echo presented their twinned charity St Margaret's Hospice in Somerset with £790, raised principally from a charity pizza night during the ship's latest deployment organised by PO Carl Neville.

news in brief

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news
in brief

■ RALEIGH'S PO Michael Hopwood pulled on his running shoes to say thank you to the hospice that had supported his mother.

Michael, an instructor at the Defence Maritime Logistics School at the Cornish training establishment, pulled in the support of three of his comrades – CPO Tony Rennie RFA, PO Claire Richardson and PO Peter Brown, to run the Plymouth half-marathon.

He said: "The Prince of Wales Hospice was fantastic in caring for my mother Margaret, who died of cancer last year.

"Raising the money was my way of thanking the staff for the support they gave, and to help them to continue providing care to others in similar circumstances."

The hospice in Pontefract provides palliative care to some 200 people on the ward each year, with nearly 1,500 visits to the day hospice.

■ TRAINEE Merlin aircrew from RNAS Culdrose headed out to the Isles of Scilly to spruce up a wildlife reserve for the Cornish Wildlife Trust.

The Trust asked the volunteers from the Merlin 1/07 *Ab-Initio* course to carry out two tasks: clearing an overgrown path and weeding boardwalk decking.

After a day's hard physical graft, the fliers from Culdrose had time for an interview on the local radio station, explaining what they were up to and why.

The Naval team also found time to compete in a tough football match against a local team which played out to a 2-2 draw, before collapsing into their accommodation at the local Army Cadet Unit.

■ WHILE away in the South Atlantic and touring Britain, the petty officers' mess in HMS Edinburgh put their energies into raising money for their charity, the newborn baby unit at St Mary's Hospital in Portsmouth.

Penguin-racing, quiz nights and mess functions all pulled together to make £5,293 for the Portsmouth unit.

■ CYCLISTS from HMS Lancaster pedalled 301 miles for Cancer Care, a respite-day centre in their affiliated city.

Their route took them from the frigate's home of Portsmouth to their namesake city, and on arrival they presented Cancer Care with £1,500.

The ship has now taken on a new charity in the Lancaster area, A Breath for Life, which treats children using a hyperbaric treatment unit. Find out more at www.abreathforlife.org.

■ THE new Kanga-Rhu Preschool in Rhu, which will extend its support to families in the local area as well as Service families, was opened by HMS Neptune's Capt David Dickens.

He said: "This is a super facility which has made a real difference. There is now much more room for fun and games, which I'm sure families will be queuing up for."

■ THE Royal British Legion in Wincanton have boosted the morale of people out on operations with the Commando Helicopter Force by making sure that there is plenty of nutty to go around.

When during a recent visit to Yeovilton they heard from the CHF how hot it was in Iraq and Afghanistan and that there was nothing better than having a packet of sweets at hand, the members of the RBL bought in a supply to see the CHF team through the Christmas period.

All three of the CHF front-line squadrons – 845, 846 and 847 NAS – are currently deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan.

news
in briefBirdman
tickles the
toes of fear

NAVAL fliers have taken to the skies over Bognor once more – albeit briefly.

The annual Birdman of Bognor brought forward a naval team from the Fleet Information Operations Centre at RAF Digby.

Although the commanding officer of the Lincolnshire RAF base laid down a challenge for contenders from all the three services based there, it seems that only the Naval men were brave (mad) enough to relish the challenge of jumping into the English seas in September.

Inspired by WO1 Dougie Holmes, a veteran of last year's SCU Leydene team, the Navy built their own triplane, named *Biggles flies undone* – flown by Dougie himself as Biggles and CPOWEA Andy Tyreman as Snoopy (for reasons which are unexplained).

The team of twelve headed down south to the Sussex coastline, and prepared themselves for the weekend's exertions.

Team member CPOCT Gaz Dewick said: "A great vantage point was quickly surveyed – outside a pub. Without delay we watched in awe as the take-offs and very quick landings commenced.

"*Biggles flies undone* was to take part in the Leonardo da Vinci class, and the pressure started to show its ugly head as we still had another 24 hours before it was our flight."

The team spent the night before their big flight in a council of war with other Birdman teams, discussing tactics with experienced



pilots and how best to use the weather conditions.

"There it was decided to carry on discussions further into the night so as to properly prepare for any eventuality," added Gaz.

"Sunday would prove to all that not only are we mighty on the waves but in the air too.

"A hearty breakfast was in order before heading over to the pier and to pinch the bottom of terror and tickle the toes of fear.

"Thousands lined the beach with mouths wide open to see team Navy battle against monstrous winds, up the pier ramp and to the point of no return (see picture above).

"Conditions were knocking the morale of our courageous pilots, though the rest of the team

laughed heartedly as to encourage the adventurous aces.

"Dougie and Andy faced howling gusts with pure grit and determination, and with one final word to his co-pilot ("jump"), our brave boys jumped to the heavens and gained a massive 3.3m with just over a second in flight."

Gaz concluded: "The truly remarkable feat won the pair the rightly-deserved Birdman of Bognor T-shirt and place on the podium of joint second position – or joint last, depending on how you look at it..."

To date the team have raised over £770 for LIVES – Lincolnshire Integrated Volunteer Emergency Service. If you would like to show your support for these intrepid fliers, telephone 01526 327005.



● Rosie and her runners on the steps at St Paul's Cathedral in London
Picture: PO(Phot) Flo Foord

Faster than a
speeding horse

ROSIE'S Runners from RNAS Culdrose sped the route from Cornwall to London in 36 hours – one hour faster than Lt Lapenotiere and his 19 horses that delivered the news of victory at Trafalgar.

The ten Naval runners ran around-the-clock for 283 miles, raising money for the children's ward at Treliks Hospital where Rosie Howis is receiving chemotherapy treatment for a rare form of bone cancer.

Organiser CPO Matt Weetch said: "We finished the run in record time. With our average speed faster than the original, Rosie's Runners beat Lt Lapenotiere by both time and distance. We have no major injuries, just a few aching limbs and nothing that a hot bath will not cure.

"We were delighted that Rosie was able to come and see us running past the Royal

Military Academy Sandhurst, and jumped on the bus while Staff Sgt 'Dinger' Bell was running his leg of the route.

"The whole team did really well and we hope to raise a lot of money for the Children's Ward at Treliks."

"They all did really well," said Rosie. "But I am not letting them rest just yet, I am now taking them on a sight-seeing tour of London to celebrate."

The Culdrose runners travelled at an average speed of 7.39 miles per hour, beating Lt Lapenotiere's horses' average of 7.18 miles per hour.

The runners set off from Penzance on a Monday afternoon and ran 'around-the-clock' to arrive at Admiralty House in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

Pledge your support to CPO Weetch on 01326 552815 or cuscpo@culdrose.mod.uk.



● 13m RSJs are winched in to Dartmoor by Sea King helicopters from the Commando Helicopter Force

Call in the
heavy-weights

LIFTING and shifting to impossible locations are what the helicopters of the Commando Helicopter Force in Yeovilton do best.

And when the call came from the Dartmoor National Trust to help with a 'little' bridge-building task in the midst of the moors, it was the Sea Kings of 845 and 846 that came to the rescue.

42 Commando had already been to the remote site at Lustleigh, near Bovey Tracey, to work on the foundations for the ageing bridge, but time came for something even bigger and stronger than Royal Marines.

Enter the mighty King.

Under the control of the experts of the CHF Mobile Air Operations Team (MAOT), and working with the RAF Joint Air Delivery and Test Evaluation Unit, the Sea Kings lifted 38 tons of sand, cement, stone and stores on to the site – which was basically a 20m square winch-hole in the midst of dense wooded countryside.

And on the last day, four 13m-long RSJs (reinforced steel joists) into place for the bridge-builders.

Sgt Marty Adams RM, leader of the MAOT, said: "This was an extremely demanding task for both the aircrew of the aircraft and the teams on the ground.

"Whilst CHF MAOT are trained to carry out such work, this particular spot was especially difficult.

"It was tremendously gratifying for the whole team to see the finished product."



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● Sister and brother LReg Emma Crawley and L/Bdr Chris Kearn
Picture: LA(Phot) Dan Hooper

O brother, here art thou

ASSAULT ship HMS Albion was the meeting place of two Forces' siblings who met up during amphibious exercise Grey Heron.

LReg Emma Crawley is one of the small team of RN Service Police on board the warship, and her Army brother Lance Bombardier Chris Kearn serves with 7th Battery Royal Artillery in Arbroath.

Chris is currently attached to 45 Commando working as part of a fire-support team for

helicopter and beach assaults with X-ray Company – which meant he was with the commandos for the amphibious exercise.

Emma, who has been in the RN since 1997 while her brother joined the Army a year earlier, said: "It's nice to be in the exercise environment together for the first time in ten years."

During a whirlwind tour of the ship, Emma showed him around the amphibious fleet's capabilities.



Sombre times

IT has been a time of pause and remembrance across the nation, but two units from the Royal Navy travelled to Auschwitz in Poland and to the Somme to remember those who had died in the conflicts that raged across Europe.

Personnel from 824 NAS, the Merlin training squadron based in RNAS Culdrose, visited the battlefields and cemeteries of the Somme.

AET Luke Cowton said: "Walking along the old front lines, you can still find bullets and shrapnel in the fields. Farmers still find shells and grenades whilst ploughing the land, and leave them on the roadside for the Army to collect."

"Many of those buried in the Somme are in graves marked 'Known unto God'."

"In all the cemeteries visited these markings came up constant-

ly, which is a chilling testimony to those who served their country with so much dignity and pride."

"One of the things that was particularly surprising during this trip was finding out the huge role that the Royal Navy played during the fighting in the Somme."

"One can only try to imagine what the sailors were thinking as they reflected on their fortunes of war; after signing up to fight powerful sea battles with the RN, it would have been the last thing they expected to find themselves fighting for their countries' freedom in the dreaded stinking trenches of the Somme."

Luke summed up the feelings of all the Merlin squadron saying: "Although most people are aware of the Battle of the Somme, it is not until you stare headlong at the rows upon rows of graves that you begin to appreciate the enormity of the war, the number of everyday families that the war affected, and most hauntingly the amount of young lives that were tragically lost in history."

"Those men fought for our freedom with honour and glory and must be remembered, not forgotten."

It was to a different aspect of war that PO(PT) Mickey Breed led a party from the Medical Centre at HMS Collingwood.

In sunshine the party of eight – military and civilian – stood amid the abandoned walls of the German death camp Auschwitz.

Mickey said: "The first thing

that was noticeable was the sheer amount of people visiting the site, all ages, all nationalities – including a lot of Germans."

"Instead of being packed full of emaciated and exhausted prisoners, each of the buildings now houses various exhibits reflecting different aspects of the camp."

"By far the most poignant and unnerving sight for me was a picture taken of a group of Hungarian Jews getting off the train after being deported to Auschwitz – the picture shows a small boy holding on to his younger brother and mother."

"His face is one of total confusion and fear, unknown to him he was being sent to the gas chamber."

From Auschwitz the group moved on to Birkenau, the Nazi's labour camp.

"There is a strange unnerving quiet hanging over Birkenau. People say no birds fly in the camp, a claim rubbish by our guide – however it was a lovely bright sunny day and I never did see a single bird during the visit."

He added: "The gas chambers (pictured above), although no longer standing, serve as an indication of man's ingenuity and ability to design the ultimate killing factory."

"Five hours visiting the camp was definitely enough, there was a strange quiet all the way back as our group reflected on what they had just seen."

"To this day I have not fully come to terms with what I saw."



Look into Hood

THE only living survivor of the loss of HMS Hood, Mr Ted Briggs, visited his ship's namesake building in HMS Collingwood.

The Naval veteran presented Cdr Allun Watts, the training base's executive officer, with an album of photographs from the Hood's 1923-24 period.

The album is held with memorabilia from HMS Hood in the building.

Also taking pride of place in Hood building is a painting of the ship by artist David Jordan – an artwork to which the veteran provided invaluable guidance and insight.



● PO Duncan Kniebbs interviewed for ITV's Britain's Best Dish
Picture: LA(Phot) Shaun Barlow

A sausage dish

SAILORS on board HMS Cumberland – the 'fighting sausage' – enjoyed a tasting test courtesy of ITV programme *Britain's Best Dish*.

The sailors sampled the three dishes shortlisted as the nation's favourite, all cooked on board by the ship's own galley crew.

TV director Yvonne Alexander said: "It was an absolute pleasure working on board. I've never known a shoot to run with such fantastic military precision."

Cumberland's CO Cdr Peter Sparkes said: "Food plays an important part in keeping morale high while a ship is deployed, and it is great that those who work hard are showcased on national TV."

news in brief

AWARDS and recognition of Naval personalities include:

■ Capt Matthew O'Sullivan RM of 847 NAS has become the first recipient of the Darren Chapman Award that commemorates the commanding officer of the squadron who was killed in action over Basra, Iraq.

The award, which will be presented annually, is given to the front-line pilot who, from training to front-line flying, has demonstrated the highest personal, professional and leadership qualities.

■ CPO Grant 'Mac' McGuire has been awarded the RN's Sick Berth Petty Officer's Efficiency Medal.

Although the medic is now serving on board HMS Bulwark, his medal recognises his time within the Defence Diving School in Portsmouth where he doubled the output of the medical section and designed three separate training courses.

■ PO Russell Simkins of HMS Chatham has received a Commander in Chief Fleet's Commendation for his quick responses when mooring ropes parted the ship from its ammunition buoys in Devonport.

■ Cdre David Steel, Naval Base Commander Portsmouth, is due to receive a civic award from Portsmouth City Council for his leadership when the future of Portsmouth Naval Base came under review in the last year.

Council leader Gerald Vernon-Jackson said: "David has been an inspiration to many people in the city during an extremely uncertain and worrying period when a very heavy black cloud hung over the base."

■ Logs(PA) Nicola Taylor became the first recipient of the Anthony Cavanagh Memorial Trophy as the result of her hard work during specialist training.

The award was donated to the Defence Maritime Logistics School at HMS Raleigh by the family of 22-year-old Writer Anthony Cavanagh who died after an unprovoked attack in his hometown of Liverpool.

■ CPOET(WE) Lance Morris of SCU Leydene has been presented with a US Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal for his outstanding professionalism as a COBLU maintainer instructor whilst on exchange with the US Navy at Corry Station, Pensacola, Florida.

■ Lt Thomas Michael Knott has been awarded the Beaufort-Wharton Testimonial Prize at HMS Collingwood as the Naval college entry with the highest marks in navigation.

■ Lt James Martin won the Carl Zesis Prize as the officer with the highest marks in navigation after completing a 13-week course at HMS Collingwood.

■ Dr Colin White, eminent Naval historian and director of the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth, has been appointed as Visiting Professor at the University of Portsmouth.

The academic said: "I am most honoured. Maritime history is an absolutely vital part of general historical studies. I look forward to playing a part in bringing this marvellous story alive to those who come to study here in Portsmouth."

AND just to prove that the RN is keeping an eye to the future:

■ Former pupil Lt Cdr Mark Brayson of 815 NAS flew his Lynx from RNAS Yeovilton to his old school Lawrence Sheriff Grammar School, Rugby;

■ A Lynx helicopter and personnel from destroyer HMS Manchester dropped in on Grosvenor Grammar School, Belfast;

■ Five youngsters from Hillside Residential, Inverkeithing High, St Columbas High and Dunfermline High were welcomed for two days into HMS Caledonia;

■ Olympic contender Lt Cdr Penny Clark from Sultan spent the day with pupils from Ipswich School sharing her sailing expertise.

news in brief

A CLASS SUBMARINE

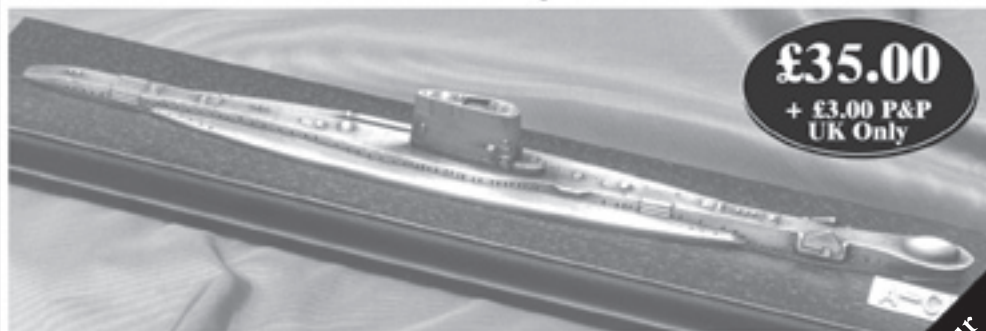
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news
in brief

■ AS a last farewell before HMS Endurance departs, Anchor the Bear – a gift from Manor Fields Infants School in Basingstoke – paid a flying visit to the school in one of the ice-breaker's Lynx helicopters.

The ship's CO Capt Bob Tarrant wanted the bear to say goodbye in style, and arranged the visit as part of the helicopter's routine training exercise.

Anchor is the longest-serving sailor on board the Red Plum, which is on a long 18-month deployment to the southern hemisphere.

Follow the ship (and the bear) online at www.visitandlearn.co.uk.

■ Sgt Christopher 'Taff' Hunter RM – quite literally – dropped in to see his beloved football team Swansea City.

Taff, part of the Royal Marines Commando Display Team, abseiled into Liberty Stadium before his team's home-match against Hartlepool.

Club mascot Cyril the Swan accompanied the 28-strong RM team in their dramatic arrival, although it's not entirely clear if Cyril also joined in with the unarmed combat display at half-time...

■ The mountains of Spain proved a highlight for 12 personnel from 771 NAS at RNAS Culdrose who headed out to northern Spain for a taste of mountain environment and adventure training, organised by Lt Elizabeth Leckey and CPO Steve Houghton RNR.

Nine complete novices and three experienced instructors scrambled up peaks of over 2,000m in the Pico de Europa range, negotiating precipitous cliffs in the clouds while vultures circled overhead.

■ RENOWNED Naval aviator, and author of *Wings on my Sleeve*, Capt Eric 'Winkle' Brown was welcomed to Belfast by the Ulster Aviation Society, the Royal Aeronautical Society (Belfast branch) and the Royal Naval Association.

Capt Brown gave a talk on board historic light cruiser HMS Caroline and signed copies of his book.

The veteran began his flying training with the RN at the Elementary Flying Training School Sydenham, near Belfast.

■ THREE for the corps – straight from Gordano School in Portishead, Christopher Derrick, Christopher McCallum and Joshua Davis have all begun their new lives together as Recruits at the Commando Training Centre Lympstone.

Christopher Derrick follows in his father Roger's footsteps, and his example is strong among the youths.

Christopher McCallum said: "I always wanted a career in the military, and specifically the Royal Marines as they are the best of the best. One of my dad's friends served with the Royal Marines in the Falklands and I grew up listening to all of his stories."

WO Neil Hodgson, the careers adviser in Bristol, said: "The fact that they are friends means that they will be able to help each other through the hard training that is to come. But it will be worth it."

"To qualify as a Royal Marines commando and to earn the right to wear that exclusive Green Beret means that they will be top of their game."

■ SAILOR Jamie Hawken and his brother Joe were nominated for the Carer of the Year title by their father for the care they have provided to their mother who suffers from neurological disease Fredericks Ataxia.

Although the two were pipped to the top title at the Pride of Britain awards ceremony in London, they scooped the regional prize in East Anglia following a public vote.

news
in briefAuthentic to
the Corps

THIS month two Royal Marine Commandos set out to recreate the daring mission of 65 years earlier, when the Cockleshell Heroes set out to mine enemy ships in Bordeaux Harbour.

On a cold wintry December morning, exactly 65 years later, Marine Lee Hanmore and Cpl Richard 'Reg' Melia will recreate that heroic voyage, using canoes specially crafted to the original design and wearing the clothing of their predecessors.

Lee said as *Navy News* went to press: "The training is going really well. We've been down at Poole training."

"Next week we're doing two back-to-back night paddles at roughly the same distances, then we'll be laying up during the day, hiding in a bush or something."

"The canoes are holding up really well. They're surprisingly good in the water. But we are finding the same problems as the original guys had – they're very unstable when you're not moving."

"And because they have no rudder they're difficult to steer when the tide waves are behind you."

"The kind of strokes you can do are very limited. It's a bit like trying to paddle an oil tanker. It doesn't turn very quickly."

The question of comfort brings one definite response: "Horrendous. Absolutely horrendous."

Apprentices Ellis Gordon, Neil Dagens, Lucy Jones and Reggie Smith at FSL in Portsmouth Naval Base constructed the canoes from wood and canvas.

Joinery production man-

ager Simon Murray said: "The apprentices don't normally get to build boats so this has been good experience."

"They have also learned about one of the most daring commando raids of World War 2 and come to appreciate the bravery of the men who carried it out."

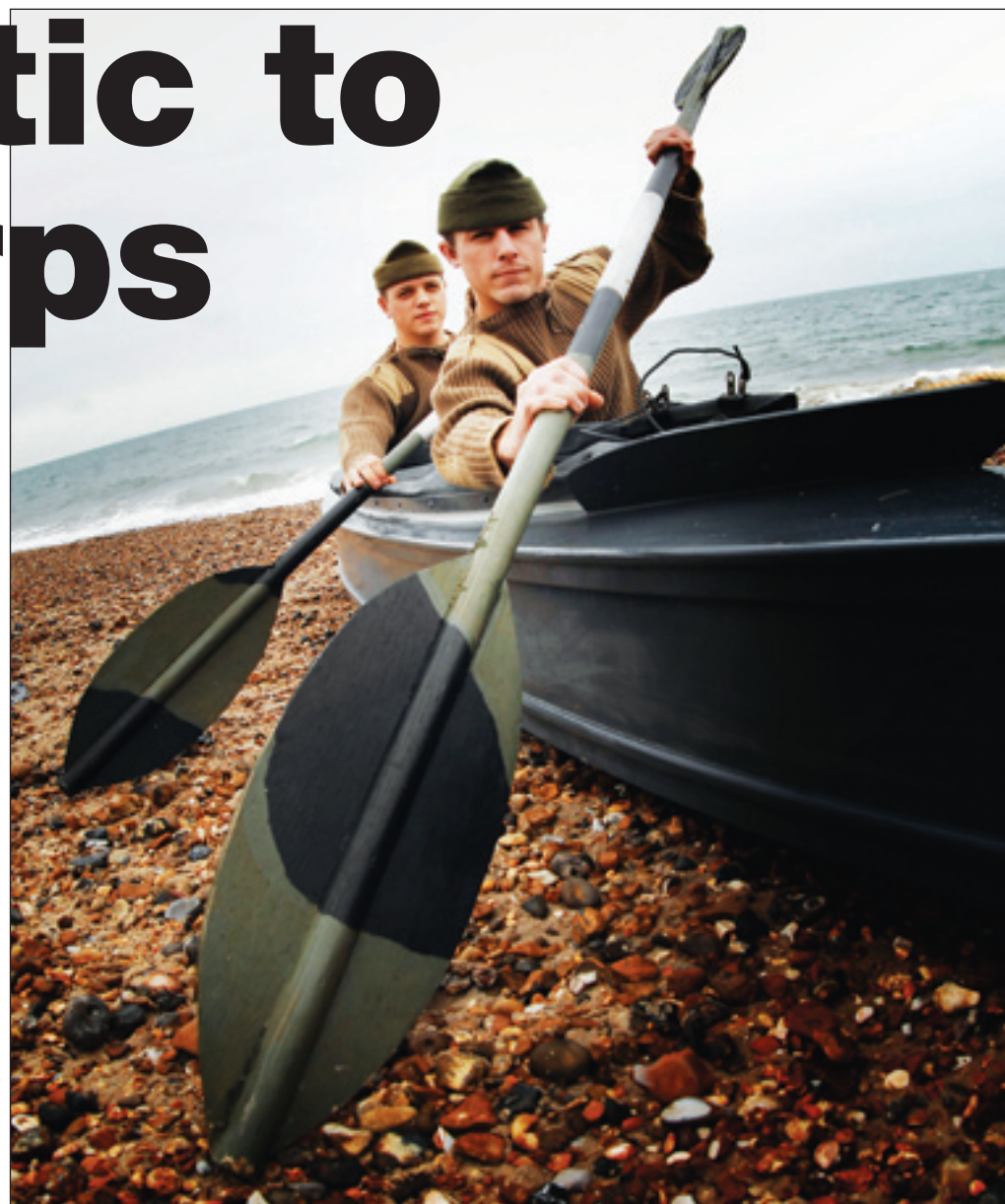
It's not just the kit that's right, the two Marines are even taking rations that tally with those of the day.

"The raid wasn't very well documented because of the nature of the operation, so we're not entirely sure what they had, but we know what was around in 1942."

Lee concluded: "The training has been a real eye-opener. We had a pretty good idea of what they got up to. But it's quite amazing what they managed to achieve. They knew the risks they were taking and went ahead."

"This row isn't about me and Reg, it's about the guys who didn't come back. To highlight this mission because people need to know more about it – it's a major part of the Corps' history."

Incidentally sharp-eyed readers may recognise Cpl Melia as our ghillie-clad sniper on the frontpage of our November issue – which has proven a particularly popular cover for downloads from our online e-edition at www.navynews.co.uk (a shameless plug for e-edition – Ed).



● Cpl Richard Melia in the foreground (you might recognise him as our coverguy last month) and Mne Lee Hanmore recreate the challenge of the Cockleshell Heroes
Picture: LA(Phot) Dave Griffiths



● Simon the cat held in the arms of one of HMS Amethyst's crew in July 1949 (centre, back row)

Simply Simon

THAT famous cat Simon has been remembered with a ceremony at the Ilford PDSA Animal Cemetery.

Simon, the Amethyst cat, is the only cat among the 62 animals to have received the PDSA Dickin Medal, the animal equivalent to the Victoria Cross.

PDSA's director general Marilyn Rydstrom said: "There is no doubt that Simon was special to the crew of HMS Amethyst."

"The fact his name and story live on helps ensure that the men who sadly lost their lives in the incident are also not forgotten."

"The power of animals to support and sustain morale in times of conflict can never be underestimated."

"Simon's story is an enduring example of this fact."

Simon was credited with saving the lives of crew members on board the Amethyst during the Yangtze Incident in 1949.

The feline guardian protected

the crew's limited food stores from rat infestation, despite having been badly wounded by shrapnel himself.

Once the siege was ended, HMS Amethyst returned home on November 1 1949 – Simon died weeks later in quarantine.

His funeral at the PDSA animal cemetery was provided with full military honours.

On the anniversary of the ship's return, Lt Cdr Stuart Hett laid a wreath on his shipmate's grave.

He said: "Simon's company and expertise as a rat-catcher were invaluable during the months we were held captive."


"During a terrifying time, he helped boost the morale of many young sailors, some of whom had seen their friends killed."

"Simon is still remembered with great affection."

PDSA is the UK's leading veterinary charity, providing free care for the pets, visit www.pdsa.org.uk.

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The Royal (Navy)

HEINZ prided itself on its legendary 57 varieties.

Twenty-eight suits HMS *Illustrious* just fine.

We're not talking about a rich selection of tinned beans and table sauces.

We're talking about a rich selection of aircraft, 28 different types of aircraft from 11 different forces provided by seven different nations.

All have safely landed upon and taken off from the flight deck of Britain's strike carrier in an eight-month spell unprecedented in the ship's illustrious (sorry) history.

Some of the aircraft are old friends: the Merlins of 814 NAS, the Harriers of the Naval Strike Wing.

Others, well others, they're just plain odd: the US Marine Corps' Osprey (the aircraft-cum-helicopter).

Today it's a more common sight on the flight deck: Harrier GR7 and GR9s of 1 Squadron RAF.

If the sight of jump jets on the deck of *Lusty* is commonplace, the sight of *Lusty* to the air force aviators is a novelty; for many of the pilots this is the first time they've flown aboard a flat-top.

In little more than a couple of months, however, these jets will be the airborne fist of Magic Carpet, a sizeable carrier task force exercise east of Suez.

Before any pilot can 'ride the carpet', he must be qualified to take off and land on *Lusty*.

Which is why after a hectic

spring, summer and autumn, the carrier is again at sea, this time some 40 miles off the Northumbrian coast.

Two weeks of work-up have been planned for 1 Sqn – motto: *in omnibus princeps*, first in all things – so that when they join *Lusty* in the new year, all the preliminaries have already been accomplished.

This morning two jump jets are flying, each with the prefix call sign 'Jedi' (every squadron has a unique identity).

It's easy to be blasé about such things. I've seen Harriers take off from a carrier before. I've seen them land.

Normally I've been stood on a walkway overlooking the deck where you can truly appreciate the raw power of these aircraft.

It's not something I've watched from Flyco – Flying Control, effectively the carrier's air traffic control tower.

And it's here that you appreciate just what goes into every mission. Not just combat sorties, but routine training flights like these. A good two-three hours' work invariably – involving a lot of mathematics to get the fuel/payload balance bang on, calculating the amount of run-up the jet needs on the deck before it hurtles into the air off the ski ramp at about 80kts and much more.

From Flyco, 'Wings' – Commander (Air), Cdr Henry Mitchell – and his team mull over

the figures and liaise with the flight deck crew a few feet below before giving the go, no-go signal.

Traffic lights reveal their decision. On amber, handlers can remove the ties which lash the jets to the deck and the Harrier can begin taxiing to its take-off position.

Green deck.

The first Jedi throttles up, there's a roar outside the window and a Harrier lumbers past before lifting off the ramp and heading off into the ether.

You don't quite get the noise here. Instead, you get the rumble, that vibration which shakes through everything.

Once the Harriers are out of sight, control passes to the bowels of the ship and the air traffic controllers and fighter controllers (Homer and Freddie, respectively) in the ops room while Flyco wait for the (*don't say it, don't say it*) return of the Jedi (*Groan – Ed*).

It's the task of Homer (so called not for poetic or cartoon reasons but because it's 'home' or 'homing') to keep aircraft – military and civilian – apart; it's the task of Freddie, or perhaps Frenchie in this case as the fighter controller is a Gallic officer on exchange, to direct a Harrier on to a target.

Homer (or 'Marg' as Lt Kate Hopkins introduces herself in this instance, being of the fairer sex) guides the Jedi around the North Sea air space (probably best not to use the Force here...) via a series of 'waypoints' which bear the name of Simpsons characters.

And it's down to 'Marg' to guide our pilot back to *Lusty* in fair weather or foul as the sortie ends.

As conversations go, it's decidedly one-sided.

The ATC is the only one doing the talking. The pilot has his mind fixed solely on final approach and landing.

The female voice is clear, concise, firm. (No *Dambusters*-esque crackled garble over the speaker here.)

The banter and chatter in Flyco which characterised the past few minutes is gone. In its place everyone keeps a sharp lookout for the approaching jet.

And here's the bit that's most impressive. Take-off is exhilarating,

Few warships have been busier in 2007 than HMS *Illustrious*. And few warships have enjoyed a more cosmopolitan year than Britain's strike carrier. RICHARD HARGREAVES visited *Lusty* on work-up – this time with the RAF – in the North Sea.



landing simply defies all the laws of gravity.

Coming alongside No 4 spot on the flight deck, the RAF pilot brings his jet to a hover, kicking up spray from the North Sea below.

Then there's that 'sideways slip' as the Harrier glides horizontally across to 'float' several feet above the deck, before dropping down on to the deck.

Barely have the hydraulics on the landing gear stopped bouncing and the squeal of the brakes died down than the roar of the Pegasus engine reduces to little more than a whine.

And barely had the RAF jets

departed than the carrier was in the Mediterranean again with Spanish Harriers on board once more.

The *Illustrious* variety show rolls on...

Cartoon capers, page 32

International departures

IF 12 months ago someone had suggested to Capt Tim Fraser how cosmopolitan his air force would be in 2007, he might not have believed them.

Opportunities for working with Britain's jump jet fleet – Joint Force Harrier – would be limited with the aircraft heavily committed in Afghanistan.

Harriers are *Lusty's raison d'être*. There's little point having a carrier with nothing to carry. It would take, her captain says, "a bit of imagination and some great ground work" to make the most of his ship.

Fortunately, Britain does not have a monopoly on the Harrier. It's a British success story. The Americans fly it. So do the Italians. And the Spanish. The Indians. The Thais too.

And the Harrier

community is pretty tight-knit as well. There are strong ties between the numerous squadrons. Personal connections can break the ice and smooth the way in the upper echelons of the military.

And so it was that Col Eric 'Beans' Van Camp (Van Camp is a popular American brand of tinned beans, continuing our Heinz theme) brought his US Marine Corps AV8Bs aboard off the Eastern Seaboard during the summer.

That really was the icebreaker, paving the way for everything which has followed for *Lusty* this year. It proved the theory that *Lusty's* Commander (Air) Cdr Henry Mitchell was keen to test:

the idea of a 'coalition airfield' – a British warship flying Allied aircraft.

The greatest challenge was fitting the Italians aboard during Noble Midas, NATO exercises in the Adriatic. It wasn't a physical problem, or a linguistic one. It just wasn't planned.

Italian Harriers and their carrier were due to be a key part of the war game. The Garibaldi wasn't available, so the Italians asked to fly off *Illustrious* instead.

Five days later, they flew aboard... joining a carrier already crammed with Spanish jump jets. The Spaniards already had a tight programme to meet supporting

Midas, but *Illustrious's* team managed to ensure the two distinct Harrier squadrons fulfilled their obligations.

"There are subtle differences between the Harrier forces. All the aircrew speak English – the Italian and Spanish pilots are trained by the Americans," says Cdr Mitchell.

"More challenging was working with the maintainers – they know roughly what you're talking about, but it's important to press the right switches in the right order. Luckily, some of the Italians had spent some time in the USA and so spoke English."

Life on board was made slightly easier for the Spaniards because there are three Hispanophones aboard. Italian speakers were slightly more difficult to find, but the carrier team produced handy language

cards listing common phrases, while the chefs and stewards, sorry logisticians (catering services (preparation) and (delivery)), produced tri-lingual menus.

There were also cultural nods to our visitors: tapas evenings for the Spaniards, hymns in the respective languages during Sunday services, and important pipes in the three languages.

Some things, however, have got to be done one way – and one way only. British pilots count pressure in millibars; their Spanish and Italian counterparts use inches of mercury. We fly 'true' headings; Spanish and Italians fly magnetic headings.

"It's hard enough running a business meeting in three languages. Now imagine the scenario on a busy flight deck in the middle of the night – the consequences of getting things wrong are serious," Cdr Mitchell explains.

"But everyone knuckled

down and got to it. There wasn't a hiccup. We've pushed the boundaries further than ever this year."

Everyone involved with this multi-national experiment has been impressed with the outcome.

"We've often regarded ourselves as a 'national' force," says Cdr Mitchell. "We've broken the old mould. It's been a fantastic opportunity for us and our visitors – all of them want to come back."

Not everything revolves around the flight deck on a carrier, of course, as Capt Fraser stresses:

"Success is not just down to the aircrew. It's down to all the ship's company working side-by-side with our guests."

"This has been my first time aboard a carrier. The sailors always impress me. They can turn their hand to anything that's asked of them. Together, we've made the most of this year."



● Pilots, ground crew and aircraft handlers carry out pre-flight checks on No 1 (Fighter) Squadron Harriers in the North Sea as a Merlin of 814 NAS approaches *Illustrious* and (above) bunch of five... A quintet of RAF Harriers roar past *Lusty* in formation

variety performance

The story of JENGO, Ginger and Jack

THERE are three aircraft carriers in the Royal Navy.

Actually, strictly speaking, HMS Ocean isn't really a carrier but a Landing Platform (Helicopter).

So there are two aircraft carriers in the RN, then.

Actually, there's only one. Well, there's only one as far as HMS Illustrious is concerned.

"Where's the other ship at the moment?" asks Lt Cdr 'Micky' Spillane, head of strike operations on Lusty.

The other ship? The other carrier (mentioning the name is a no-no.)

Ah yes, the 'other ship' (or the 'other one').

So if there's such friendly banter between ships, what hope friendly relations with the RAF.

Well, actually, the Crabs get off surprisingly lightly.

For a start, (disappointingly), there's no-one called Ginger or Algie. There's not the slightest hint of a handlebar moustache

either (one pilot did have a Mexican bandito 'tache but he's wisely shaved it off... and he was a matelot).

In fact, wandering around Lusty you barely notice the RAF. There are 100 of them on board, but they invariably blend in with the ship's company.

All are dressed in No 4s or khaki flying suits. The officers have even tailored their formal dinner dress to blend in with the dark blue environment.

Indeed, often the only thing outwardly distinguishing them from the world of the Senior Service are those funny epaulettes (or 'bar codes' as the sailors like to call them).

There are, of course, subtle differences: titles (SENGO and JENGO, for example – not Japanese sumo wrestlers but Senior and Junior ENGINEERING Officers) and ranks, but the two forces are more similar than you might think.

With all this 'jointery' (to borrow some MOD-speak,

sorry), with all this blending and merging, it is, of course, reassuring that the RN can still hold its own in certain areas.

"Some of the RAF guys got a sound thrashing from the middies at uckers. That's good to see," says Lt 'Baz' Issitt, one of two Fleet Air Arm pilots flying with 1 Sqn.

He has a bit of tightrope to walk.

He's RN through-and-through, but since passing out of Dartmouth half a decade ago he's had little taste of the Senior Service... and a lot of tasting the RAF.

"I have known most of the squadron for five or six years. I've trained with them. I don't see them as RAF or Royal Navy. I just see them as mates," Baz adds.

That said, he's keen to stress the importance of the Royal Navy and its ships (which the Crabs, annoyingly, have a habit of calling 'boats'...).

"From my point of view,

it's important to explain that something like the future carrier is vital not just for the Royal Navy but to all the forces," Baz stresses.

That's a valid point. For just as today's generation of fast jet pilots fly at sea irrespective of whether they're dark blue or light blue, the same goes for the next generation of aces.

That's something the Fleet Air Arm readily accepts.

Its men and women expect to live in a tin can for weeks, perhaps months, on end.

The slightly pampered Crabs go to sea with a little trepidation, however.

"It's actually a lot more comfortable than I expected it to be," says pilot Flt Lt

'Butch' Butcher.

"I expected to forego the 'basic luxuries' – that chance to pop outside into the fresh air to relax for a few minutes.

The 'basic luxuries' these days aren't that basic. Around the UK there's digital and satellite television available not just in messes and the ward room, but in individual cabins, and there are 100 computers hooked up to the internet... if, of course, you have the time for such pleasures.

"Everyone has made the squadron feel very welcome on board, right from the word go," 'Butch' adds.

And that's pretty important, nay crucial.

We here at Navy News are guilty of some gentle ribbing of our air force brethren at times (well, most of the time...).

But deep down there's considerable mutual respect.

"Nothing is just

'acceptable'," Baz says of life in 1 Sqn. "It always about being the best."

His squadron comrade Butch adds: "Seeing how it all comes together at sea is fascinating. You see how the team works."

Everything in the air is pretty much the same whether you're Fleet Air Arm or RAF – manoeuvres, routine, chatter on the radio.

Only taking off, landing, and living in 20,000 tonnes of pusser's grey is different from life at Cottesmore.

Well, not entirely. You won't find air traffic controllers at the Rutland airfield. They're just a voice on the end of a headset.

They're a voice on the end of a headset in the Senior Service too.

But they're also a face in the wardroom in the evening.

"That personal touch is very important – just discussing things afterwards. It's a bit of a novelty and it really enhances the way we work," says Butch.



● Illustrious turns into the wind at speed ready for her Harriers to land

Pictures: PO(Phot) Christine Wood and LA(Phot) Darby Allen, HMS Illustrious

Dial M For Mountain



● Pick of the day... B Company 7 Indian Paras demonstrate the art of ice climbing

FOR the first time in six decades British troops headed to the Indian sub-continent to train.

Not since the days of the Raj have British forces moved through India bearing arms.

It took a special breed to re-write the history books – not least because they were fighting in the Himalayans.

M Company of 42 Commando headed east for the appropriately-named

Himalayan Warrior to see whether these experienced mountain fighters could live and, crucially, fight in the world's highest mountain range.

The company set up camp in Leh in the northern Indian province of Ladakh, about 300 miles north of Delhi, which sits on a plateau 3,300 metres (10,800ft) above sea level.

Royals may accomplish the super-human but that doesn't mean they are immune to altitude sickness.

Every green beret on Himalayan Warrior suffered from the illness: some men had trouble breathing, others

found it hard to sleep or had little will to eat and most Royals suffered from headaches and dehydration.

"As soon as we landed I began to feel light headed and dizzy which grew into a strong headache," said C/Sgt John Dewhurst.

"I've conducted mountain training around the world but never at this altitude. Nothing can prepare you for the feeling you get here."

So the six days of acclimatisation were vital. On day one the green berets would be out of breath after simply climbing stairs. By day six all the team bar four men were able to climb for three hours carrying their packs.

They also got to grips with Indian weapons, Indian culture and Indian history (but no Indian

takeaways...).

"Thankfully all my symptoms stopped as we moved through the acclimatisation package, although I still suffer from shortness of breath and being exhausted during physical exertion. No change there, then," C/Sgt Dewhurst added.

Once used or at least coping with living and exercising at high altitude, the Royals went into action. It's all very well living at 10,000ft, but warriors must fight.

The green berets are Britain's experts in cold weather/mountain warfare but typically they conduct their training in northern Norway.

Cold? Yes. Unforgiving? Yes. High? Not especially.

Fortunately, B Company 7 Indian Paras are experts in high-altitude warfare. The Indians have 60 years of experience patrolling – and defending – their country's sometimes troubled northern borders.

And so the British and Indian elite forces headed north of

Leh to Khardung La – widely proclaimed as the highest pass in the world navigable by motor vehicle.

It stands some 5,600 metres (18,380ft) above sea level – 3½ miles – and here, for three days, the Royals and Indian paratroopers waged war.

The two forces linked up to launch mock attacks on the checkpoints which stand at the northern and southern gateways to the pass, as well making a cliff assault and conventional attack against the pass itself.

"The biggest lesson learned harked right back to one of the key principles of war: flexibility. Through professionalism, willingness to accept new ideas and being as flexible as possible,

our two nations made a combat-effective task force," said Capt Tim Lewington, second-in-command M Company.

His boss, M Company's Commander Maj Martin Collin said the spell in India constantly reminded his men of the ties between the two nations.

"It's a land so familiar to our military forebears, and yet for us today it's an exotic and very 'foreign' destination," he added.

"But it's also one where we know our forces share many common bonds and traditions from our shared colonial past. We were extremely privileged to have this opportunity – particularly as we were led to understand that we were the first British land forces to train in northern India for 60 years."

Indian paratroop officer Maj Sandeep told the commandos upon their departure that he hoped Himalayan Warrior would be "the start of a lasting relationship between the Royal Marines and our paratroopers".

Perhaps it will be. But before another passage to India by the green berets, the Arctic slopes beckon once more as the Royals return to Norway in the new year.

● File and ice... M Company trudge through the Himalayan snow





Breach delivery

AMID the cold winds of Dartmoor the assault engineers are running through the conclusion of their last five days of AE2 training, Exercise Final Breach.

Stanford Farm is an isolated farmhouse on the MOD ranges in the Devon countryside, but today it is alive with the crackle of gunfire and detonations of billowing smoke.

Four AEs and four riflemen are tasked to take the building held by 'enemy insurgents' (pictured in this column by PO(Phot) Nicola Harper).

As the riflemen provide covering fire, the breacher runs forward and slams the mousehole charge against the stone wall of the farmhouse.

It's the final part of the five-day challenge which has seen skills in boathandling called into action on the water as the engineers planned the potential destruction of a bridge in case the territory fell into 'enemy' hands.

A spot of cliff assault was followed by a Commando Helicopter Force Sea King arriving to carry the green berets into Dartmoor to set up an observation post over this hotbed of insurgent activity – actually an old farmhouse.

Minefields had to be cleared, and purified water provided to supply the troop units that would be following behind (within the scenario).

Finally 'explosive methods of entry' – to use a technical but graphic term – are put into practice as the AEs and riflemen blast their way through the insurgents' (instructors') ranks.

Sgt Dave Maslen grins: "Dems [demolitions] week is everyone's favourite week on the course as AE3s, because it's the first time they've done anything like that.

"As courses go, although the AE1s have more info to deal with, the AE2s course that they're doing here today is the hardest.

"There's lots of learning that's new to them.

"Up to now they've been going around pulling mines out of the ground, but now they realise that it takes six hours to plan it safely."



● "You were only supposed to blow the bloody doors off..." The extremely effective results of a concussion blast set off by 42 Cdo Assault Engineers to down a building used by Taleban snipers in Afghanistan – AEs Mne Troy Thorpe and L/Cpl Topsy Turner stand on the left

Life's a blast in the Marines

SHRUG. Grin. "We like blowing things up."

There's something inherently cheerful and practical about the men in the military who blow things up for a living.

The Royal Marines' Assault Engineers are cut from the same cloth as their brethren.

Hard-working pragmatic men who break into broad grins when they talk about their job.

These are the men who, in their own words, "build things and blow things up" in the forefront of the action as the battle crackles around their ears.

And it's to the Commando home at Lympstone that Assault Engineers (AEs) return throughout their careers.

From initial entry as Marines after eight weeks they emerge as AE3s, then as their careers progress they work their way up the specialist ladder to AE2 and AE1.

Specialisations are not always favoured by green berets – Royal Marines join the Royal Marines to be Royal Marines, to fight in the frontline, to lead the action and dominate the landscape.

But in recent years the AEs have always been at the front of that action and such is their utility in battle that they are ever in demand by commanders at the frontline.

The 'breachers' are the most recognisable form of the frontline AE – the man who slams the mousehole charge against the wall and blasts a hole through, knocking out any bad guys inside and letting the good guys in.

This is no job that involves sitting fat and happy back at camp while a battle rages.

Every unit at the front will have one or two AEs embedded within it, men who can recognise 60 different forms of mine, who can blast a hole into a building, or bring a bridge down before the enemy can use it.

Not to mention that these men are somewhat useful to know back at camp, in fact, they're the ones who make the camp, plan the build of the camp and its fortifications out of whatever items are to hand, ensure that water is supplied and drinkable, and that life is bearable in the midst of conflict.

It's a small group of men that make up this much-in-demand branch – only 83 assault engineers

The Specialist Wing at the Commando Training Centre Lympstone turns the best of the best into something even better – infantrymen honed to provide infantry support through such skills as mortar fire, to drive the Viking armoured vehicle, or to blow bloody big holes in buildings...

within the Royal Marines, and a list of people as long as your arm waiting to join.

Sgt Dave Maslen said: "There are AE troops in all three commando units. We can either operate together as one entity on a larger job, or on the field as a section attached to one of the close combat companies.

"The three key words are mobility – helping our lads get to where we want to get, counter mobility – stopping the enemy getting to where it needs to be, and survivability – getting the water supply and drainage sorted.

"If you go into an area and there's nothing there, when you get a camp up and running, and it's got a hundred blokes living in it, it is immensely satisfying."

Colprot – or collective protection – is one of the main focuses for the AEs, digging trenches and building walls out of nothing to safeguard the lives within.

"Sandbagging, when you get it right it is the difference between stopping a bullet or not stopping a bullet – or a blast."

Two years ago when Pakistan was devastated by mudslides and rain, it was AE green berets who spent two months over Christmas rebuilding lives in the area.

Sgt Maslen said: "In Pakistan, we had two and a half months in a camp we constructed. We landed in the middle of a mountain area.

"Then we had to go off doing what we do best – scrounging. And we built a camp. All the other nations there were coming to our camp because it was the best."

These men are also the experts in lifting and shifting, whether the intriguingly-entitled Quad Pod which is used in cliff assault to shift heavy items from the beach to the top of the cliff, or boat handling as demolition charges are placed under bridges.

As 40 Commando fight in the dust and sand of Afghanistan, there are some 15 AEs bound in to the units fighting on the ground.

L/Cpl Ben 'Topsy' Turner and Mne Troy Thorpe only returned from Afghanistan in the spring, and are now taking their AE2 course as they work their way up through the AE ranks.

And their abilities have proven popular out on the ground.

Troy said: "I was doing a lot of things out there – water purification, a lot of demolition work, blowing firing points for our lads to fire from, and making methods of entry for getting lads in."

The walls in Afghanistan proved of sturdier stuff than the Iraqi compounds amid which the Royal Marines had previously fought.

The useful mousehole charge was put aside in favour of an anti-tank barmine which successfully blasted through the thick Afghan walls, dropping the Taleban inside

in a hail of bricks and stone.

The AEs can also bring down buildings and structures that are being used against the Royal Marines in theatre.

Ben added: "We dropped a three-storey building that overlooked our camp that was being used by Taleban snipers."

"And we took down some trees that they were using too," added Troy.

"The other lads in the camp realise that we can do a lot for them to make their lives easier," commented Ben.

He went on: "Training teaches you a lot. Time like this out in Dartmoor is the best bit of the training.

"But you don't really learn it until you get to a fighting unit. Then you realise just exactly what you've been doing."



"And if we get it wrong, that's it. The full mission's gone."

The training for the assault engineers at Lympstone is tough, with days of 15-20 hours of intensive study, practice and testing the norm.

But getting it right matters. Big time.

You get it right or buildings collapse on Marines inside, you get it right or troops are hit by scarce, brackish water, you get it right or blasts shatter camp-tents like playing cards.

And the AEs get it right.



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Aloha Mo

MIKE GRAY joins the Black Du

A VISIT to Hawaii by a British warship is an uncommon thing these days.

But that is not to say that the British flag is an uncommon sight.

In fact, the Union Jack is to be seen everywhere – as part of the state flag, it is a permanent reminder of the historic links between Great Britain and Hawaii (or Hawai'i, for the purists).

The latest Royal Navy ship to visit these palm-fringed shores was HMS Monmouth, which called into Pearl Harbor in the latter stages of her global deployment.

Following nearly eight months of high-profile port visits and multinational exercises, the three-day sojourn in the Aloha State allowed the men of Monmouth – and the sole female officer – to unwind.

The fact that the pound was at a high against the dollar helped, as did the promise of balmy weather – the trade winds which blow through the islands prevent the energy-sapping high humidity endured by the frigate in many part of the Far East.

So there may have been some disappointment as the frigate headed towards her berth in weather that was more Hamoaaze than Honolulu – as she slipped past the historic USS Missouri rain fell from the threatening grey clouds.

But the shower quickly passed, and as Monmouth berthed, within sight of the revered Arizona Memorial, the sun broke through again.

The visit to Hawaii followed a long sea passage of more than ten days, some hampered by a heavy swell broadside on.

Prior to that Monmouth had

taken a leading role in a high-profile multinational exercise off Japan, participation in which had led to changes in the frigate's programme.

The Proliferation Security Initiative exercise Pacific Shield 07 saw 11 warships from seven countries gather to plan and carry out interdiction operations and compliant boardings under the scrutiny of large press corps.

As the only ship that can conduct rapid-roping insertions by helicopter, Monmouth took centre stage, putting boarding teams on to the huge American cargo ship 1st Lt Harry L Martin, which acted as a suspect vessel.

Coverage of the event was broadcast nationwide in Japan, with several international news agencies granting it airtime as well.

The exercise concluded with further demonstrations from Monmouth's boarding teams in front of senior military officers and the Japanese press.

On arrival in Pearl Harbor, a short taxi ride from the fabled Waikiki Beach in Honolulu, some of Monmouth's sailors were quickly ashore to hunt out local hotspots and book surfing lessons and snorkelling trips.

Others took it easy, picking up some bargains at the huge NEX or Navy Exchange store on the base or just grabbing a burger at the McDonald's which was a stone's-throw from the jetty.

But there were official duties to be carried out as well.

The ship hosted the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Royal Navy and the US Navy (see page 24), while a low-key cocktail party attracted dozens of US Navy officers.



● **HMS Monmouth arrives in Pearl Harbor in the rain (above)**
Picture: MC1 James Foehl (USN)

● **Sailors gather for a 'Ship's Company Photograph' (left)**
Picture: LA(Phot) Brian Douglas

● **Monmouth comes alongside in Pearl Harbor (below)**
Picture: MC1 James Foehl (USN)



Monmouth

ke in the Sandwich Islands

For others the break would have to wait – others like CPO Martin Clewes, described by the ship’s Executive Officer Lt Cdr Paul Bristowe as “one of the heroes of the deployment”, who rolled up his sleeves, gathered his team and set to work on an ailing diesel engine on their first evening in port.

Many booked into hotels on Waikiki to enjoy the restaurants and nightlife, and to swap a narrow bunk for a king-size bed.

The ship’s Commanding Officer, Cdr Tim Peacock – who has barely had a break since taking his ship out of Devonport in February – took a drive around the island of Oahu, and still managed to spot several of his crew at various beaches.

One key element of the visit took place early on a Saturday morning, long before the tourists began spilling from the buses at Pearl Harbor.

Using a launch laid on by the US Navy, a party of more than 20 officers and ratings from Monmouth crossed the short stretch of water to Battleship Row, just off Ford Island, where eight capital ships were moored at the beginning of December 1941.

The might of the Pacific Fleet had sailed to Hawaii as the situation in the Far East deteriorated, but the ships were ostensibly there to discourage attacks on allies.

No one expected a savage pre-emptive strike by Japan on American forces – but that is what happened early on Sunday December 7, when waves of the Emperor’s bombers hit Pearl Harbor.

They found battleships drawn up in tight lines and aircraft closely parked on the airfield to defend against sabotage – but that simply made the job of the Japanese bombardiers easier.

High explosive bombs and deadly

● *Cdr Tim Peacock speaks at the Arizona Memorial (below)*

Picture: LA(Phot) Brian Douglas

● *The remains of one of USS Arizona’s gun turrets (bottom), visible from the Arizona memorial (below left)*

torpedoes rained down on the fleet, sinking five out of eight battleships (the other three were damaged), three cruisers, three destroyers and three smaller ships.

Almost 190 aircraft were lost, and the death toll on that Sunday morning was 2,335 Servicemen and 68 civilians; 1,177 of the dead were aboard the 32,000-ton battleship USS Arizona, which sank in nine minutes following a devastating explosion in a magazine.

Fewer than 340 men survived. Fortunately, three of America’s most valuable assets – the aircraft carriers Enterprise, Lexington and Saratoga – were at sea and escaped the carnage, going on to play their part in the defeat of Japan.

Fuel storage tanks also survived – a glaring tactical error by the attacking force – but such considerations were far from the minds of those who surveyed the smoking ruins of the fleet.

Pearl Harbor has an iconic position in the American psyche, at the heart of which lies the graceful bridge-like Arizona memorial, which serves to commemorate all who died in the attack.

And Cdr Peacock paid tribute to those early American victims of World War 2, speaking of the sudden and brutal shift from peace to war on that sunny Sunday morning 66 years ago.

He also spoke to those gathered of the sacrifices of the other Allied nations, including the men of the Royal Navy’s British Pacific Fleet.

Having laid a wreath, Cdr Peacock and his colleagues spent some time in contemplation, studying the names of the victims which reflected the melting-pot nature of their mother country.

J Turnipseed, H Bauer, F Gomez, M Hessdorfer, R Kaiser and four Nelsons – all lie in 40ft of water within their steel tomb.

The British visitors also peered into the ruffled waters of the harbour, where the outline of the Arizona can be seen from the memorial, which straddles her amidships.

Just to one side of the memorial



● *The American and Hawaiian flags fly over Honolulu (above)*

● *Haleakela volcano on the island of Maui, shrouded in clouds at an altitude of 10,000ft, from Monmouth’s Merlin (right)*

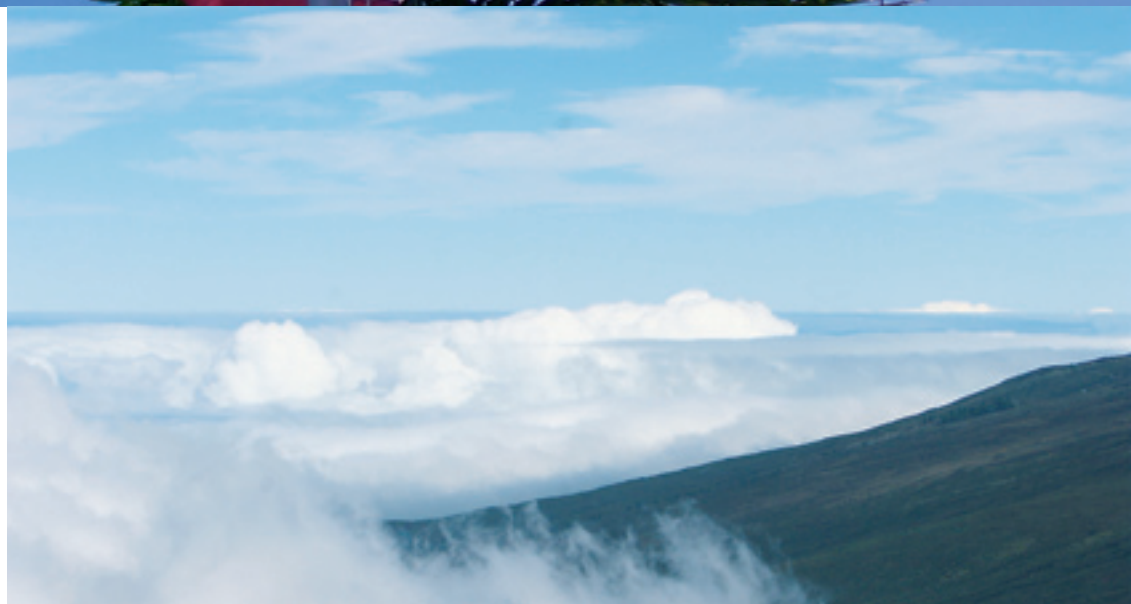
is an eerie rusting ring of metal, the remains of Number Three gun turret, which is permanently clear of the water.

Homage paid, the British returned to their ship and turned their thoughts to the seven-day leg to San Diego, the penultimate port of call before their return to the West Country early this month.

As usual, long sea passages are put to good use, basically long-distance patrols as the ship monitors traffic and unusual activities, as well as carrying out on-board exercises.

On leaving San Diego, Monmouth was straight into counter-narcotics operations – meaning two RN Type 23s were hunting drugs runners off both coasts of Central America, HMS Portland being the frigate in the Caribbean.

📅 *Next month – Global perspective*



United kingdoms half a world apart

OAHU, the island of Honolulu and Pearl Harbor, has been greeting ships of the Royal Navy since the late 18th century.

James Cook was the first European on record to have sighted the islands of Hawaii, having spotted ‘Woahoo’ (Oahu) in January 1778 while on passage from Tahiti, though there is evidence in inaccurate charts that Spanish explorer Juan Gaetano may have spotted them in 1542.

Cook’s association with Hawaii, which he named the Sandwich Islands in honour of First Sea Lord the Earl of Sandwich, ended in violence.

Having landed on the Big Island (Hawaii itself) to be greeted with enthusiasm – it was, fortuitously, an auspicious period of feasting for a Hawaiian god – Cook and his men were initially well-received.

But on departure some weeks later, a mast of HMS Resolution was damaged in a storm and Cook returned to Hawaii, where the islanders were troubled by this deity with feet of clay.

Cook, believed to have been irritated by illness, became embroiled in a dispute, and was killed in a skirmish with locals on February 14 1779.

A monument now stands in his memory at the isolated Kealahou Bay, near the town of Captain Cook.

Later Naval visitors fared rather better, particularly the affable Capt George Vancouver, who was born 250 years ago this year.

Vancouver, after whom the city in Canada is named, visited Hawaii in 1792-4 during his historic survey of the Pacific coastline, and proved not only a fine ambassador, but also an enlightened man.

By this time Hawaii was well down the road to unification under King Kamehameha I, who became concerned at tales of ‘ambitious’ European nations seeking colonies.

The king and his chiefs voluntarily acknowledged to Vancouver that he and his people were subjects of the British crown, seeking protection “against any future molestations.”

This, it seemed to Vancouver, was of benefit to Britain as well “under a conviction of the importance of these islands to Great Britain in the event of an extension of her commerce over the Pacific Ocean...”, though “whether this addition to the empire will ever be of any importance to Great Britain, or whether the surrender of the island will ever be attended with any additional happiness to its people, time alone must determine.”

Vancouver was also angry at the “shameful” scams being perpetrated by traders, avoiding payment for food, or providing shoddy goods at inflated prices, including fatally-flawed muskets.

Indeed, in Volume III of his *Voyage of Discovery*, Vancouver states “the putting of firearms into the hands of uncivilised people is at best very bad policy, but when they are given in an imperfect and insufficient condition for a valuable consideration, it is not only infamously fraudulent, but barbarous and inhuman.”

At the celebrations surrounding the formal approach to Britain on February 25 1794, Vancouver describes a dance by a young woman named Puckoo, whose

“person and manners were both very agreeable.”

Her intricate clothing was described in detail – as was the fact that “she wore no dress from the waist upwards”.

The performance “excited considerable applause from the numerous spectators, who observed the greatest good order and decorum”...

Thus, although never formally ratified in London, the Hawaiian islands came under the protection of the Crown, and the British flag was added to that of Hawaii in the early 19th century.

In the 1820s King Liholiho, his queen and close courtiers travelled to England, and were lionised by London society.

But the royal couple died of measles, and their bodies were returned to Hawaii in the frigate HMS Blonde, commanded by Capt the Rt Hon Lord Byron, the poet’s cousin.

Decades of cordial relations followed, but with the Hawaiian royal lineage faltering, in 1893 a small group of ‘reformers’ forced the elected King, David Kalakaua, to sign away many of the rights of the monarchy in what became known as the ‘Bayonet Constitution’.

The so-called annexationists, almost exclusively non-natives, had strong backing in the United States and from local businessmen, and Hawaii swiftly became a republic and an American territory.

It took its place as the 50th state of America in 1959 – but there are still islanders who nurse a sense of grievance, and would like to see the sovereign and independent Kingdom of Hawaii restored.



Filling in the Fulmar gaps

I HAVE been asked by the OIC Station History Room at RAF Lossiemouth to appeal to the readers of *Navy News* for our latest project.

We are currently trying to build on the existing Station History Room at Lossiemouth, but are desperately lacking items from when the station was an RNAS (HMS Fulmar) between 1946 and 1972.

We are currently appealing for individuals who are willing

to donate or loan photographs (originals will be returned) and memorabilia to the history room to contact us.

Anyone who can help is requested to contact me either by email, telephone, or in writing at: RAF Lossiemouth, Lossiemouth, Moray, IV31 6SD, telephone 01343 817359, or by email: whittakerl298@lossiemouth.raf.mod.uk

– Lee Whittaker, Senior Aircraftman, RAF Lossiemouth

Could you be our chairman?

AMONG the readers of *Navy News* I am hoping to find someone who could become the chairman or woman of our marine environmental project's steering group.

Finding Sanctuary is a South West project that aims to recover, protect and sustain marine diversity by creating a network of Marine Protect Areas (MPAs).

We are looking for someone with experience in leading a group through constructive discussions and decision-making, someone with a degree of knowledge about the marine environment, and who importantly has a neutral outlook.

Everyone involved with *Finding Sanctuary* has a belief in our overall goal, which is to create a healthy and biologically diverse marine environment for future

generations. Our seas have been an open and shared resource since the dawn of history.

We realise the concept of closing areas is one that needs to be approached with care and understanding, especially for all those whose livelihoods or leisure activity could be changed by the MPA network.

I would welcome anyone who is interested in the position of *Finding Sanctuary's* Steering Group Chair to get in touch via phone: 01392 878327, email: tom.hooper@southwestfoodanddrink.com or write to me at the address below.

– Tom Hooper, Darts Farm Village, Topsham, Exeter, Devon, EX3 0QH



Frenchified supper

WE learn something new every day.

In the *Daily Mail's* Weekend magazine a little 'Sofa Supper' recipe caught my eye.

It was for one of the best-loved meals in the Navy – 'Hammy-eggy-cheesy' which I still make for myself at home.

The recipe in the magazine shows just how high-faluting some of the names given to food have gone, since the humble yet delightful meal we knew as Hammy-eggy-cheesy has now been given the grand title of *Croque Madame*.

Imagine that on the dining-hall menu!

It is to be wondered at what many of the other dishes served up by Chef would be called?

For sure they would never get names as colourful as Jack gave them, such as "s**t on a raft" for kidneys on fried bread, to name just one.

There are probably many others which I have forgotten – any ideas lads?

– J W 'George' Sexton, former FCMEMN(P), Walton-le-Dale, Lancashire

Festive frolics



● Christmas jollities alongside in Scotland in 1915



I UNEARTHED a menu from my ditty box recently for the Christmas dinner on board HMS Glasgow in 1938.

The ship was at sea around the time of the Munich crisis, and she was the second ship of my career, which started in 1937 when I was 15 – the first was HMS Iron Duke, Admiral Jellicoe's flagship at the Battle of Jutland.

On Christmas Day we had been excused scrubbing decks, which enabled the boys to lie in for another half hour. The youngest member of the crew, barely 16, was promoted to Captain and wore the Captain's hat during the morning and afternoon watches, and with it hanging over his ears had to guard it with his life.

The mess decks had the typical Navy decorations, mainly balloons, which had been decorated by the lower deck cartoonists in a way in which I dare not describe. These balloons had in some previous time been issued by the sickbay as a vital companion for Jack when ashore...

The acting Captain carried out Captain's rounds, wishing us all a happy Christmas, and asking if we had any complaints about the food?

As a boy of 16 I was not entitled to a rum ration but for this occasion some of the senior ratings gave us a snifter or a sipper from their grog issue.

Christmas 1938 was to be the last peace-time one until 1945 when war-time rationing was still in force.

Happy old days – and have a merry Christmas, everyone.

– Jim Reed, former Gunnery Instructor, Hedge End, Southampton

Caught on camera

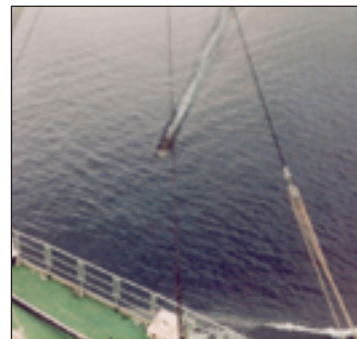
RFA Tidepool was my first posting with the RFA and at the time I took the picture (right), I was 18 years old and serving as a junior radio and electronics officer.

The photo was taken from the monkey island and the lack of sharpness is due to the fact that I only had time enough to lift my camera and press the shutter – it was not until I had the film developed on reaching port that I discovered I had actually managed to capture the torpedo before it hit the ship.

The torpedo was allegedly fitted with an electronic warhead and therefore not armed, hence my survival.

The photo was taken whilst steaming up a Norwegian Fjord during Exercise Silver Tower in 1968. The torpedo was courtesy of the submarine HMS Otter – one of four that were accidentally fired at Tidepool. I wonder how many can claim to have taken such a photo and lived to tell the tale?

– Alan Santillo



X factor rumbles on

THE debate about "X" in official numbers seems to have rumbled on for several issues, and disappointingly no-one has offered a definitive solution. I have kept quiet until now, as mine is also hearsay.

But here goes: while languishing in RMB Portsmouth in 1961, then known as HMS Victory, awaiting a draft chit to sea, I was told by a RPO that anyone who was serving in the Navy whilst anyone who was involved in a mutiny was also serving was given an "X" in their official number prefix letters, to show that they were possibly "tainted" and needed to be watched.

Given the Invergordon Mutiny which I think occurred in 1929,

anyone who had just joined would have been in service until the early 1950s.

To support this theory, my oppo who joined as a Boy Seaman in 1947 was given the official prefix of "JX".

This he retained until the age of 18 when he signed up for the old seven and five years' engagement, when his prefix letters changed to SSX, the SS standing for Special Service.

He still retained his official number and the X prefix. Unfortunately he was medically discharged in 1951 with TB, but had he done the full 22 years' service, he would have been in the system until 1971.

When I joined in 1959 I just

had the P for Portsmouth as my letter prefix, some 30 years after Invergordon, by which time anyone serving during the mutiny would have been pensioned off.

I do however stand to be corrected.

David Colman, East Wittering, Chichester

...YOU completely obviated the purpose of my letter (October) that 'X' referenced Royal Naval Volunteer Reservist ratings) by editing out the first paragraph, added to which you incorrectly typed the prefix of what had been my official number (LXD instead of LDX).

– Lt Cdr Bob Read, (Ret'd) Liverpool, New York, USA

Sorry – Ed

Specials' history

FURTHER to Fl Lt Alan Corbett's letter regarding the CT branch (November) the predecessors of the CT were the Radio Operator (Specials).

During World War 2 the RO(S) were based at HMS Andersen in Ceylon and also at sea as HF D/F operators. During the 1950s the branch consisted of a mixture of linguists and non-linguists.

At the end of 1962 the branch split into two and the majority of non-linguists became Radio Operators (W) Electronic Warfare and the linguists remained RO(S).

At this time the RO(W) branch was located at North Camp at HMS Mercury and RO(S) branch at RAF Tangmere in West Sussex.

The branch remained at Tangmere even after the camp officially closed as an RAF station, until May 1978, when it also moved to a newly-constructed unit within HMS Mercury.

In the autumn of that year the Radio Operator (Specials) became Communication Technicians.

Over the years the RO(S) and CTs have worked alongside their Army and RAF colleagues at various locations throughout the world, forming close links with the other services.

– Norman Langley, former CRS(S) CCCT, Yapton, West Sussex

Brave divers

MAY I agree wholeheartedly with Alan Cross CMEA (H) (*letters*, October) that very little publicity has been given to RN divers in the past.

They were one of the first of the Special Forces assembled during World War 2 and their work often involves great danger, ie bomb disposal and clearing the Gulf of mines during both Storms to the present day.

Watching as usual the Cenotaph parade recently I heard the RN divers mentioned for the first time.

I still think they should be classed as a special service for the way they put themselves into harm's way.

– Christopher Roddis, former RN Diver, Malaga, Spain

A new book, *Diver by Tony Groom*, with a foreword by the First Sea Lord, is due to be published by Seafarer Books in January, ISBN 978-1-906266-06-6.

Online paper

JUST a few words to say how impressed I am at your new e-edition.

As I live and work in Qatar in the Middle East, it was a great pleasure to read the new format. I have already replied to the Phoebe reunion request I spotted, which I would never have known about.

Congratulations, I'm sure ex-matelots around the world will agree with me.

– Max Abolins, ex-POWEM(O) Qatar

Our e-edition publishes Navy News in its entirety online.

It is available from the first of the month and is aimed at serving people on deployment and readers living abroad, so they can have a look at the paper while waiting for their printed copy to arrive in the post.

It can be accessed via the Navy News website at www.navynews.co.uk – Ed

opinion

NAVY divers went through a difficult patch a few years ago, with a series of accidents that saw some of the clearance divers' operations curtailed, followed in 2005 by the decision to stop using ships' divers.

Things seem to be looking up now. The new Clearance Diver Life Support Equipment (CDLSE) diving set, due to come into service next year, will regain the old 60m-dive capability which was suspended following a number of defects and accidents with the current CDBA set, and the demand for clearance divers' skills is greater than ever.

They are needed not just for the never-ending task of clearing our seaways of thousands of tons of unexploded wartime ordnance, but also to provide in-water maintenance

The views expressed in Navy News do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Defence

and repair to ships and submarines. Not to mention the huge task of underwater Force Protection for the RN Fleet around the world, the provision of which demands very specific skills and vigilance.

Divers seem to be back in the news at the moment, with Prince Harry visiting the Fleet Diving Squadron, mention of divers at the Cenotaph, and a new book due out in January which tells one man's story of the Navy's Clearance Diving Branch.

Let's hope this publicity attracts new volunteers to join a demanding but very rewarding branch which needs officers and junior rates who are highly committed and ready to go the extra mile that the job demands.

BY TUGG

CLASSIC JACK



● Dark Adventure, Dark Aggressor and Dark Biter showing an impressive turn of speed in the English Channel in 1957

Diving on the Darks

READING the letters from Lt Cdr Upton and Mr Padginton (July and August) about the 'Dark' boats brought back some memories.

I remember diving on the Dark Intruder in June 1966 at Portland, to inspect the propellers, both props were badly pitted with a hole right through a blade on the starboard prop.

It was said this was happening because of the salt crystals in seawater acting on the metal of the prop because of the very high revs seen at high speed.

In August 1967 I had a similar experience with Dark Hero in Vernon creek.

I never believed the salt crystal story personally, but thought it might be a lack of cathodic protection.

They certainly were fast though!

— Terence Gosling, former ABCD2, Alford, Aberdeenshire
The caption in our archives for the picture above reads: "...light coastal craft powered by Napier Deltic engines of very high performance. This opposed piston two-stroke cycle engine in triangular form with three crank shafts is a new engineering development. They can be readily adapted for use either as motor torpedo boats or motor gun boats."

Not so plain English

I have just attempted to read the article *Time to take stock – one year on* (page 23, November).

Was it drafted by someone from the European Union? I know I may be an old sailor, 1949-72, but I couldn't understand it at all. Why have the naval authorities stopped using plain English? what or who is a TLB?

One other gripe, call me pedantic, but no self respecting Hydrographer would call the end product of his work a *map*, it's a *chart* for goodness sake.

— K Miller, Plymouth

David Hogan-Hern, Deputy Programme Manager for the Fleet Transformation Programme, said: "I must say that I am delighted Mr Miller read the article so avidly – even if some of the language was not as transparent as it could have been."

"The TLBs to which we referred in our article are Top Level Budgets, the major organisational groupings within the MOD. The Fleet TLB comprises the Fleet and Naval Home Commands and a single Headquarters."

"Transformation plays a vital part in making the shore-side of the Fleet as effective as it can be in its support to the front line. Transformation and its successor, 'continuous improvement', will become part of all our daily lives – which is why it is so important that as many people understand it as possible."

"We do, therefore, try to avoid technical jargon: our apologies if we didn't manage this time."

Tot ended in tears

READING the letter from Ken Tipper (November) re-ignited a painful memory for my husband who was serving in HMS Wolverton at the time the rum tot was terminated in 1970.

The loss of losing his rum ration was nothing compared with the trauma he experienced on bringing his tot glass home as a memento of six years imbibing Pusser's Rum.

Taking one look at the filth-encrusted glass I plunged it into hot water, whereupon it disintegrated in my hand.

Watching a rugged sailor sporting a full set, close to tears, is something which should never be witnessed.

Even after 37 years, he hasn't forgiven me.

— Mary E Holmes, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Notts

Christmas cheer for the Booties

I AM a serving member of the Royal Marines on a six-month operational tour in the Southern Helmand Province of Afghanistan in a remote Forward Operating Base.

Supplies are frugal at the moment to say the least and only cover the remit of operational effectiveness.

As an avid reader of *Navy News*, please could you publicise this to your readers, as any small comforts sent by anyone would be gratefully received and greatly appreciated.

Mail takes about two weeks to get here from the UK and vice versa, and we would be most grateful of any support, be it just a letter or a bar of chocolate for Christmas.

We all look forward eagerly to any replies, thank you all for your time in reading this letter.

— Cpl P Eastwood, 40 Cdo RM
Letters and chocolate can be sent to to Cpl P Eastwood, A Coy, 40 Cdo RM, Op Herrick, BFPO 792 for distribution among the boys. There is a 4.4lbs (2kg) weight limit on parcels.

■ See page 47 for more details on Christmas post – Ed

LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication.

Email correspondents are also requested to provide this information.

Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

Given the impressive volume of

letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in *Navy News*.

We look particularly for correspondence which stimulates debate, makes us laugh or raises important issues.

Please try to keep your submissions as brief as possible – our space is limited.

The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.



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Memorial testifies to destroyer death toll

IT WAS not just the chilly wind blowing through the Medway towns which caused people to dab at their eyes.

In the season of remembrance, another memorial was brought into being, and for many at Chatham's Historic Dockyard, this was personal.

Personal to all those men with chestfuls of medals who can still remember their long-dead oppos as if it were yesterday.

Personal to all the relatives who were there to ensure their brave kin were not forgotten.

And personal to the guest of honour, the Duke of Edinburgh, who unveiled the new Destroyer Memorial Monument.

For Prince Philip served in destroyers during the war, and he remarked on the fact that it is the big ships which attract all the attention.

"I suspect that it is only among mariners that the value of the smaller ships is properly appreciated," he told the assembled veterans.

"Nelson, when he was Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, never seemed to worry very much whether he had enough lines of battleships, but he never ceased to complain about the lack of frigates."

Prince Philip said that destroyers "were involved in every major naval action during the war – as well as in many minor, but equally hazardous operations."

He added that many of the 11,000 men who died in action in the 142 lost destroyers were "my contemporaries and friends".

The siting of the memorial at Chatham was "particularly appropriate", being the home port of many of the RN's smaller ships over the dockyard's 400-year history.

And Cavalier was also a natural location, being a typical Fleet destroyer of World War 2.

"She forms a very important part of this memorial, and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the volunteers and donors who have restored her so successfully and with such loving care," continued the Prince, adding that it was a "great honour" for him to unveil the memorial.

The event started with the arrival of the Royal Marines Band from Dartmouth, and an impressive drill demonstration by a full 96-strong RN Royal guard of sailors, well-rehearsed from the Cenotaph ceremony.

Prince Philip, escorted by the Vice Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Viscount De L'Isle, and the chairman of the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, Admiral Sir Ian Garnett, unveiled the new monument – a striking bronze bas-relief created by sculptor Kenneth Potts, depicting a destroyer rescuing men from a sunken ship.

Assisting the Duke were Sea Cadets POC Adam Montgomery (Sheppey unit) and LC Gayle Chilmead (Medway Towns unit), while the VIP also had time to chat to the seven standard bearers.

Chaplain of the Fleet the Venerable John Green then dedicated HMS Cavalier as the National Destroyer Memorial, and after a brief tour of the warship the Duke of Edinburgh went on to the dockyard's museum to meet some of the 900 veterans and relatives who attended the ceremony.

The royal visitor was piped aboard the

old destroyer by LS(MW) Thomas Kay and AB(Sea) Mark Priestman of HMS Ledbury, which was on the Medway to support the event – the ship bears the name of a famous wartime Hunt-class destroyer which survived both the ill-fated PQ17 and the battered Pedestal convoys.

One of the veterans who met the Duke at the museum was Leslie Smale, who had not only served in HMS Cavalier, but had also been on board one of the ships named on the monument.

"I was on board HMS Hardy in 1940 at Narvik when she was sunk," said Mr Smale (87), who lives in Devon.

"I was on the bridge when the ship was struck, and I could see the German destroyers through a gaping hole in the side of the wheelhouse.

"I thought 'If this is my day then it is my day,' and then we took a little swim in the Arctic Circle – but it wasn't too far to shore as the ship had been grounded."

Mr Smale lost 18 colleagues during the attack, but went on to serve in other destroyers, including convoy runs down the E-boat Alley of the East Coast.

"I think this memorial is very good – outstanding," he said.

After lunch Prince Philip watched the Royal Marines Band

perform on the waterfront, close to HMS Ledbury, and the sailors cheered ship as he departed.

The ship remained at Chatham to welcome visitors on board over the next three days, during which time hundreds of people clambered aboard.



● From top of page: The Duke of Edinburgh inspects the Royal Guard before the ceremony; HMS Ledbury on the Medway; Sea Cadets Adam Montgomery and Gayle Chilmead help unveil Kenneth Potts' monument, an integral part of the National Destroyer Memorial; the Duke of Edinburgh on the bridge of HMS Cavalier with Michael Keir, director of the HMS Cavalier Trust and chairman of the Friends of HMS Cavalier Trust

Pictures: Barry Duffield, except HMS Ledbury, taken by Cdr David Waters (NROEE)

Fastest in the Fleet

HMS CAVALIER is the last surviving Royal Navy destroyer to have served in World War 2.

She was built at the Cowes yard of Samuel White in 1944, and saw service in the Arctic and Western Approaches before transferring to the British Pacific Fleet for the closing stages of the war.

More than ten years after the fighting ended she was refitted and modernised, continuing to earn her keep in both the Far East and home waters until she was paid off in 1972.

Five years later the HMS

Cavalier Trust bought her, and after going on display at Southampton and Brighton, then making a brief visit to Tyneside, she is now permanently on display in Chatham Historic Dockyard, alongside the 19th Century anti-slavery sloop HMS Gannet and O-class submarine HMS Ocelot, which dates from the 1960s, which are also open to the public.

The 'greyhound of the seas' – Cavalier once claimed the title of the fastest ship in the Fleet – is now the official National Destroyer Memorial 1939-45.



All are remembered, at home and overseas

THE ROYAL Navy operates on a global scale, and over the centuries, ships, squadrons and brigades have left their dead scattered across the globe, victims of war, local strife, disease and misfortune.

So it is only right that the Royal Navy's acts of remembrance reflect its long reach.

Among the most remote of the solemn services was that on the flight deck of frigate HMS Monmouth, approaching the end of her global deployment.

Remembrance Day was spent at sea in the Pacific Ocean, where a wreath was cast into the sea.

Over in the Caribbean, sister ship HMS Portland was visiting the island of St Lucia on November 11.

Her ship's company took part in two concurrent services, one on board at sea and the other ashore.

The ship service was led by Executive Officer Lt Cdr David Knight, while the frigate's Commanding Officer, Cdr Mike Utley, and a guard took part in St Lucia's national Remembrance Day Parade.

Destroyer HMS Nottingham staged a ceremony on her flight deck in Brazil while alongside in the port of Fortaleza.

East of Suez there were a number of ceremonies held on November 11.

Sailors and Royals based in Bahrain paid tribute during a service in Manama, while in Afghanistan Royal Marines of 40 Commando at Kajaki and Naval Service personnel at Kandahar airfield, including members of the Naval Strike Wing, held their own services.

Out at sea, HMS Argyll held a service on the flight deck as she patrolled the oil platforms off the coast of Iraq, whilst sister frigate HMS Sutherland put a wreath into the sea as she passed through the Gulf of Aden.

The ship's company of fast patrol boat HMS Scimitar paid a visit to Tangier to take part in the Remembrance Sunday ceremonies at St Andrew's Church.

Nine sailors based with the Gibraltar Patrol Boat Squadron made the short trip to Morocco to

a warm reception from the British community in Tangier.

And the Navy was well-represented at the Cross of Sacrifice in Gibraltar itself.

Further out into the Atlantic, Fleet flagship HMS Ark Royal halted flying training at 1100, with a service being held in her cavernous hangar deck.

All three Services were represented at a ceremony in Butmir Camp, Bosnia.

A little closer to home, Naval Service officers and ratings based at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), at Mons in Belgium, marked the 90th anniversary of Passchendaele by laying White Ensigns at the RN and RM graves at the Passchendaele New British Cemetery, then moving on to Tyne Cot.

World War 1 Navy veteran Henry Allingham (111), a founder member of the RAF, travelled across the Channel to lay a wreath at St Omer, where he was stationed 90-odd years ago.

All ships and units overseas in different time zones observe the two-minute silence at 11am local time.

In the UK, a new stained glass window in Cathcart Old Parish Church, Glasgow, was dedicated on Remembrance Day.

The window is dedicated to the officers and men of the Royal Marines, and shows a brightly-lit cross in the colours of the Corps.

The people of Plymouth were encouraged to take part in the Remembrance Ceremony on the Hoe by being invited to place a wreath or poppy cross at the foot of the memorial following the civic event.

The Royal Marines Band and Naval presence remained at the site until everyone who wished to pay his or her respects did so.

Sailors from HMS Drake, ships and submarines, and Royal Marines from 3 Cdo Brigade and 29 Cdo RA took part in the parade in Plymouth, while across the Tamar in HMS Raleigh it was the staff and students of the RN Submarine

School who took the lead.

Joined by members of the Plymouth and London branches of the Submariners Association, wreaths were laid at the Statue of the Unknown Submariner outside the school in honour of the 167 boats and their crews which have been lost since 1901.

Among those laying wreaths was Cdr Rob Dunn, Officer-in-Charge of the school, whose grandfather, PO Tel James Storr, died on board HMS P222 in 1942.

Trainees from Raleigh also represented the RN at the war memorial in Torpoint.

Another group of submariners attended a service in Newton Abbot – HMS Triumph is undergoing maintenance in Devonport, so members of her crew led the parade in her affiliated town – while the crew of HMS Torbay, nearing the end of a refit in Scotland, were also in Devon, paying their respects in Torquay.

HMS Cornwall made her presence felt around her namesake county, with contingents attending

11 services.

Type 22 frigate HMS Cumberland was five miles south of Start Point on Remembrance Sunday, and conducted a service and wreath-laying ceremony – in particular for the officers and ratings of Hunt-class destroyer HMS Penylan, sunk by torpedo in December 1942 at the point where Cumberland halted.

Current Hunt-class ships were prominent around the country.

HMS Cattistock visited Poole, and took part in ceremonies there and in the affiliated village whose name she shares.

HMS Brocklesby was at King's Lynn for a four-day visit, during which time she provided a platoon to march through the town on Remembrance Sunday, while the entire ship's company attended a service at St Margaret's Church.

A group of 125 RN and RM personnel, including members of the RFA and QARNNS, took part in the national ceremony at the Cenotaph in Whitehall.

Our feature on the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire has been held over until next month

● *The Navy remembers, at home and overseas: LPT 'Sweeney' Todd, of the RN staff at SHAPE in Belgium, pays his respects at a Naval grave in Tyne Cot cemetery (right); Remembrance Day on the Hoe in Plymouth (below); a wreath floats in the wake of HMS Monmouth in the Pacific Ocean (left)*

Pictures: LA(Phot) Steve Johncock (Plymouth) and LA(Phot) Brian Douglas (Monmouth)





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LUSTY

'THE
HARRIER
CARRIER'

IN

NO
UNCERTAIN
VOICE

ARTIST ANNA-LOUISE FELSTEAD - WHO DESCRIBES HER STYLE AS "VIBRANT AND ENERGETIC" - RETURNED TO STRIKE CARRIER HMS ILLUSTRIOUS WITH HER PENS AND PAPER TO CAPTURE WORKING LIFE ON BOARD FOR LUSTY'S 25TH BIRTHDAY.

SHE FOLLOWED TEAM ILLUSTRIOUS IN THE NORWEGIAN PORT OF BERGEN AS THE CARRIER TOOK PART IN NATO WAR GAMES EARLIER THIS YEAR.

THE RESULT IS A SERIES OF DISTINCTIVE REPORTAGE-STYLE PAINTINGS DEPICTING SCENES ACROSS THE BOARD - FROM MEAL TIME AND GOSSIP IN THE WARD-ROOM TO HARRIER COMBAT MISSIONS.



LIFE WENT ON AS USUAL ABOARD THE MIGHTY LEVIATHAN AS SHE PROWLED THE BALTIC. IN THE HANGAR MECHANICS WORKED ON THE HARRIERS...



SAILORS GRABBED THEIR MEALS FROM THE GALLEY...



THE BANTER IN THE WARD-ROOM WAS GOOD NATURED...



THEN...

CONTACT IN THE OPS ROOM...



THE NAVIGATOR PICKS A FRESH COURSE...



THE HARRIER ACES RECEIVE THEIR BRIEFING...

ANNA-LOUISE - KNOWN AS A-L - SAYS SHE HAS NEVER BEEN INTERESTED IN PRODUCING PHOTO-REALISTIC WORK, BUT USES PLENTY OF COLOUR TO BRING THE SUBJECT MATTER TO LIFE.

"I DON'T WANT TO PRODUCE OLD-FASHIONED OIL PAINTINGS OF SHIPS CHARGING THROUGH THE SEAS," SHE ADDS.

"WHEN I LOOK AT THOSE IMAGES I KNOW SOMEONE HAS WORKED ON THOSE PAINTINGS FOR HOURS, BENT OVER A CANVAS, WORKING IN MINUTE DETAIL FROM PHOTOGRAPHS.

"THAT IS NOT WHAT I DO; I LITERALLY SIT IN FRONT OF THE ACTION, SPREAD MY INKS AROUND ME AND PAINT AS QUICKLY AS I CAN, WATCHING MY SUBJECTS MOVE AND CHANGE WHILST I WORK."

YOU CAN SEE MORE OF HER WORK AT WWW.ALFELSTEAD.COM

THIS IS THE SECOND TIME ANNA-LOUISE HAS JOINED THE FLAT-TOP - AND HER THIRD BODY OF WORK WITH A SENIOR SERVICE FLAVOUR.

IN 2000, WHILE STUDYING AT CENTRAL ST MARTIN'S COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN, ANNA-LOUISE DECIDED TO FOCUS ON SAILORS FOR A PROJECT ON 'PEOPLE AT WORK', AND SPENT A WEEK ON THE FRIGATE HMS CORNWALL.

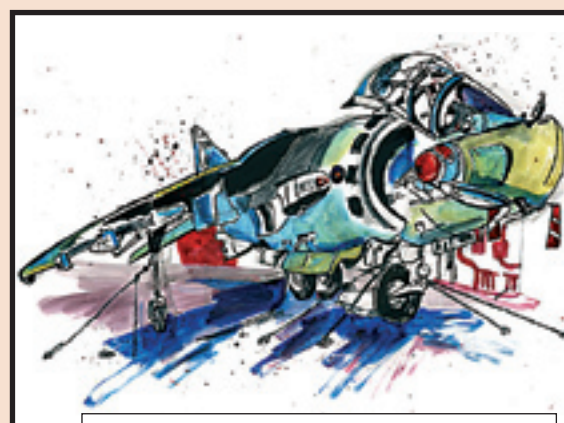
THE ROUGH SKETCHES SHE PRODUCED LED TO HER STAGING AN EXHIBITION IN 2001.

FOUR YEARS LATER HER FASCINATION WITH HARRIERS LED HER TO APPROACH THE NAVY AGAIN, ON THAT OCCASION USING COLOUR FOR THE FIRST TIME TO CAPTURE PEOPLE WORKING ON SEA HARRIERS AND SEA KINGS.

THAT WORK RESULTED IN AN EXHIBITION AT THE NAVAL CLUB IN MAYFAIR; SHE WAS ALSO COMMISSIONED BY THE MOD TO PRODUCE A SERIES OF PAINTINGS ON LIFE IN THE RN, FOR WHICH SHE TOURED ESTABLISHMENTS AND UNITS AROUND THE COUNTRY.



"HANDS TO FLYING STATIONS"



THE JUMP JET IS POISED ON DECK...



THE BIRDS PREPARE TO LEAVE THEIR NEST...

MORE FROM LUSTY ON PAGES 22-23



Ascension days

THESE are unseen echoes of the Falklands conflict – men and machines preparing for war. For a few weeks in the spring and early summer of 1982 tiny Ascension Island (at its widest it's about five miles across) served as the springboard to victory in the South Atlantic.

And recording all the preparations of Britain's Armed Forces was Bob Shackleton, a telecommunications engineer, who clicked away merrily with his camera.

Back in 1982, Bob was working for the South Atlantic Cable Company which operated the SAT1 telephone/communications cable linking South Africa with Ascension, the Canaries and the Iberian peninsula.

Pretty much every ship which took part in Operation Corporate dropped anchor at some stage in Clarence Bay to take on supplies, flown into Ascension's sole airfield, Wideawake.

Before the 1982 conflict, the runway handled just 250 flights a year. At the height of preparations for the liberation of the Falklands, it was dealing with 800 movements every day.

A support team of 1,000-1,500 Service personnel, led by Capt Bob McQueen RN, oversaw the mammoth operation to provide the Corporate task force with all it needed.

Of course the Argentinians would have been mightily interested in goings-on at Ascension and a news blackout was imposed with forces passing through the island forbidden to call home.

A quarter of a century on, no such restrictions apply and Bob is keen for his photographs to serve as an historical record of those fateful months. More than 130 images are being donated to the RN Fleet Air Arm and National Maritime Museums, plus naval historian Gordon Smith's [Naval-History.net](http://www.naval-history.net).

He does, however, need some help in identifying the units and ships involved – not especially easy as many vessels had painted out their pennant numbers and names and removed badges by the time they reached Ascension.

From the berets (and the numerous obligatory RM 'taches) Bob believes the men marching in the main picture are possibly Royals of 40 Commando, but any suggestions or corrections would be gratefully received.

You can see the rest of his collection at www.naval-history.net/FpxAAAscension.htm.

● Two youngsters watch as a Sea King returns to HMS Hermes, accompanied by HMS Broadsword (centre) and HMS Yarmouth in Clarence Bay





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'ONCE NAVY, ALWAYS NAVY'



● Some 60 shipmates from East Anglia, including members of the D Boat Association, gathered to raise the profile of the newly-refurbished Marshland Maritime Museum. The event was held at the home of Mike and Jo Smith at Clenchwarton, near King's Lynn, next door to the museum which they own and run. Among the guests was Martin McClure, drawmaster on the BBC's National Lottery show, who drew the raffle which raised £136. For more information on the museum contact Mike on 01553 765530, or email dboats@tiscali.co.uk

New man at helm

THE new president of the 8th Destroyer Association is Cdre Paul Sutermeister.

He succeeds Cdr Oliver Wright, who has stood down after 14 years because of ill health.

The Association represents members of the 15 destroyers which formed the 8th Destroyer Flotilla and Squadron, protecting British interests in the Far East between 1945 and 1963, many seeing action in the Korean War, Malaysia, Indonesia or Borneo.

The association meets annually in Scarborough, and as other reunions have dwindled in numbers the group has welcomed crewmen from other destroyers as associate members.

For details contact Sid Hindle on 0113 253 5269.

Plea for RNXS info

THE RN Mine Watching Service was established in 1952 and renamed the RN Auxiliary Service (RNXS) in 1962.

Although disbanded in 1994, there are now plans to ensure the organisation does not fade away.

All personnel who served for 12 years or more were awarded the RN Auxiliary Service Medal, and a number of ex-RNXS members are creating a Medal Roll to commemorate medal recipients.

Maurice Cocker would like to hear from all those who have the medal, with the following information: full name, unit and rank/rate; date of award of medal and any Bar; date of enrolment; details of other medals held.

Mr Cocker can be contacted at 10 Ellerbeck Road, Cleveleys, Lancashire FY5 1DH.

Ganges +50

A GROUP of Ganges boys held their first reunion 50 years after joining the training establishment.

Around 15 Old Boys and their instructor, ex-Yeoman Hoffmeyer, and their wives marked the half-century since the boys joined Collingwood Division 43 Mess Classes 352/361 Sparkers/Buntings in October 1957.



● Japan branch chairman S/M Peter Button (centre) accepts a print of HMS Monmouth during the junior rates' run ashore in Yokohama

Visitors to Japan make their point

A RUN ashore for junior rates on board HMS Monmouth was going very well – until their hosts overstretched themselves.

The night out was organised by members of the Japan branch, who are keen to make sure that junior sailors from any visiting Royal Navy warship get a chance to hit the town.

Often the chosen venue is somewhere in the heart of the

teeming capital Tokyo.

But on this occasion the Black Duke, now approaching the end of her global deployment, put into the port of Yokosuka, near Yokohama, site of a major US Navy base and some 70 miles from Tokyo.

Japan branch chairman S/M Peter Button said: "We chose a venue in the lively Motomachi area of Yokohama.

"The evening was going well, until we got a little cocky and

Branches honour Immortal Memory

KETTON and District branch held their first Trafalgar Night dinner at the Masonic Hall, Stamford.

Branch chairman S/M John McGowan welcomed guest of honour Lt 'Dutch' Holland and his partner Gayle McLaren from the Naval Section at RAF Wittering, and they were joined by more than 30 members of the RNA, RAFA and the RBL.

The room was decorated with Naval memorabilia, and

Lt Holland gave a speech on camaraderie in today's Navy and that of Nelson's time.

Members of Margate branch welcomed two standards from Holland at their Trafalgar Day parade, the result of Ramsgate branch hosting overseas visitors.

Some 55 shipmates and guests also enjoyed a Trafalgar Night dinner at the Swan Westgate.

The branch chairman told members at their monthly meeting that he had returned from the HMS Jamaica reunion with a cheque for £300 for the Sea cadets of TS Jamaica, the Margate unit.

He also presented the contents of the collection box – £121 – much raised by the sale of effects of late shipmate Bob Fyles.

Bexhill-on-Sea members were on parade four days out of five over the long weekend.

On the Thursday members, along with the branch standard, attended the funeral of S/M Arthur Pittock, who died aged 89.

Arthur was a member of the RNVR before joining the Navy in 1939 before being discharged on medical grounds in 1943.

The following day 65 shipmates and guests attended their Trafalgar Night dinner, at which the Oration was recited from memory by 91-year-old Harry Waddingham.

On Trafalgar Day itself several shipmates went to the Eastbourne branch thanksgiving service.

Members were struck by the excellent turn-out by Sea Cadets and Marine Cadets.

Monday brought the monthly branch meeting, at which wartime Telegraphist Air Gunner S/M Ron Barton gave a vivid description of Fleet Air Arm operations against the Japanese in the Far East.

More than 150 shipmates and friends from Plymouth met up for a weekend of commemorations at Torquay.

Trafalgar and the Falklands were the main themes of the weekend, which saw 11 branches represented (from as far afield as Cardiff and Watford) as well as the associations of HMS Diana, Glasgow Old Boys, RN Electrical Branch and the ship's company of HMS Bulwark.

Guests of Honour were Cdr Tom McAuslin and his wife Helen – Tom was in the medical branch in hospital ship Uganda during the Falklands, and is now CO of the MDHU in Derriford; his wife is an ex-Army nursing officer.

A church service was conducted by the Rev Mike Brotherton, Chaplain to FOST.

Littlehampton members and guests enjoyed dinner, dancing and a raffle at their dinner at the Maltravers Social Club.

Guest of honour was Area 3 National Council member S/M

Peter Reed, who was accompanied by his daughter Tracy.

Also among the 85 diners were the chairman and members of Ford HMS Peregrine FAA Association, who were celebrating Taranto Night.

Four Sea Cadets from the Chiltern unit greeted guests to Chesham and Amersham branch's dinner, held at the RBL in Chesham.

The cadets, who were accompanied by members of their staff, also piped *Hands to Dinner*, *The Side* and *Carry On*.

Trafalgar celebrations were the focus of Redruth and Camborne branch in recent weeks.

The main event, a pasty supper, was held at the Redruth RBL, where shipmates from St Austell, Falmouth and Helston branches and the Ganges Association (Cornwall Division) also joined the fun.

Later that week the Ganges Association were the hosts as Redruth and Camborne joined them for a Trafalgar Day lunch.

And the following day the branch was well represented – including the standard bearers – at the Trafalgar Day events in Madron (see below).

Almost 150 members and guests of Selsey enjoyed a Trafalgar Night dinner which was delayed because it was so successful.

The Solent View restaurant was the only venue in Selsey big enough to cope, so the dinner could not take place until the end of the holiday season.

After chairman S/M Fred Flood had spoken of Selsey's successful year, guest of honour Cdr Paddy McClurg, RNA General Secretary, spoke of Nelson and Navy life.

The chairman's wife, June, gave a rendition of *Rule Britannia*.

At least two Falklands veterans attended the Market Harborough dinner – one of whom was the guest of honour, RNA vice president Cdre Adrian Nance.

Cdre Nance, who was serving in HMS Sheffield when she was hit by an Exocet missile, spoke of the Falklands and Nelson's battle.

Among the 80 or so shipmates and guests listening was branch member Capt Alistair Swatridge RFA, another Falklands veteran.

Guest of honour at York's dinner was RNA president Vice Admiral John McAnally, who spoke while walking round the tables.

Readings were taken from log books written at the battle, and the branch secretary took the role of Nelson for a dramatisation.

Chard branch combined their Trafalgar celebrations with their 20th anniversary bash.

During the event, attended by 70 guests, branch president S/M Jim Noble presented S/M Roy Lovell with a certificate his vice president's jewel and certificate for 21 years as branch secretary.



● Standards are paraded past Capt Philip Thicknesse

Service held at Madron

THE annual parade celebrating the victory at Trafalgar and marking the death of Nelson took place at Madron, just outside Penzance.

On her way home from Trafalgar in 1805 with the news of the battle, HMS Pickle first passed her information to local fishermen in Mounts Bay, and to commemorate the event a service is held in Madron parish church every year.

The salute was taken by Capt Philip Thicknesse, CO of RNAS Culdrose, which supplied the band, and there was a good turnout of standards.



A reminder of those Glory days

MEMBERS of the HMS Glory Association gathered at the National Memorial Arboretum on to dedicate their new memorial to all who served in the light fleet carrier between 1944 and 1957.

Around 70 shipmates and partners came from far and wide, including France and Australia.

Those who travelled to Staffordshire gathered to remember the carrier's service in the Pacific, which included repatriating Far East prisoners of war; fighting for freedom and democracy in Korea in the '50s and then slowly running down until de-commissioning in 1957.

Remembered too were those who lost their lives during this period, either through enemy action, illness or accident.

The memorial was unveiled by Col Michael Evans RM, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire.

Eight standards from the local RNA, FAAA and MNA paraded, as did Bugler Albert Ray, who sounded the *Last Post* and *Reveille*.

Calendar boys

THE Cape Town branch calendar has proved a big hit, with more than 450 being sold worldwide.

As featured in our May edition, shipmates stripped off for a tasteful photo of a formal dinner, and the branch said it hopes a final push at Christmas would help boost their donation to the Simons Town National Sea Rescue Institute.

Copies at £8 each can be obtained from Mr May – Peter Turton – at bl1cks@yahoo.co.uk

April schedule

THE Channel 4 documentary on the British Pacific Fleet, *The Day of the Kamikaze*, is currently scheduled to be broadcast in April 2008.

Intrepid memorial dedicated in Leros



● Albert Poulter, on board a Greek warship, lays a wreath on the waters where HMS Intrepid capsized and sank in 1943 in Portolago (now Lakki) Bay, Leros

A MONUMENT to the memory of HMS Intrepid has been dedicated on the Greek island of Leros.

And the Greeks ensured there was red-carpet treatment for Albert Poulter and others involved in the ceremonies throughout their visit.

The series of events began with a remembrance service held at the Alinda British war cemetery, containing the graves of 180 soldiers and five men from Intrepid.

The British destroyer, along with Greek warship HHMS Queen Olga, were attacked by German bombers on September 26 1943, with the Greek ship sinking that day and Intrepid the following day.

Navy guards and musicians attended both the remembrance service and the dedication ceremony, while onlookers, including dozens of schoolchildren, gathered round.

The British Embassy padre Rev Malcolm Bradshaw officiated at both events, then the party moved on along the Port Lakki promenade to the Queen Olga memorial.

The focus then shifted to the water, with a brief trip

out to sea in a Greek warship, allowing Albert Poulter and others to cast wreaths over the spot where Intrepid capsized.

The day ended with a dinner attended by dozens of veterans and local dignitaries, at which Mr Poulter gave a speech which was simultaneously translated into Greek.

President hands over

THE annual Weymouth branch dinner held at the Weymouth Golf Club was a bittersweet affair this year.

During the dinner branch president Rear Admiral Gwyn Pritchard handed over to his successor Capt Steve Bramley after 26 years at the helm.

The new president said that as a serving Royal Navy officer he hoped to have some influence, particularly on the recruiting front.

Branch chairman S/M Dave Rodgers presented the admiral with a commissioned watercolour painting of Weymouth Harbour, and asked him to accept the award of life vice-presidency of the branch.



● Sailors from former wartime destroyer HMS Vesper gather in Skipton for the unveiling of two memorial plaques by Admiral Sir James Eberle. The plaques, on the entrance gateposts to the canal basin in the town, record the link between the World War I-built ship and Skipton, which adopted Vesper during Warship Week in 1942. The link was further strengthened in the 1980s when the Skipton branch contacted former crewmen to organise a reunion, which has become an annual event

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our October edition (right) was HMS Loch Ruthven, and the U-boat she and Wild Goose were credited with sinking in March 1945 was U683.

The winning entry was from N McElroy, of Belfast, who wins our £50 prize.

This month's ship (above) came out of reserve to cover for ships sent to the Falklands, and ended her active service days as the Wilhelmus Zakarias Yohannes.

Her pennant number has been removed, but can you name her, and identify the Asian navy which bought her in the 1980s? The right answers could win you £50.

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Coupons giving correct answers will



go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Closing date for entries is January 11. More than one entry can be submitted, but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our February edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

March to States for conference

SEVEN members of March branch travelled to the United States to attend the National Association of Naval Photography conference at Virginia Beach.

Travel delays meant the party was a little weary when they reached their destination, but they had to wait for a good sleep.

Instead, they were taken by their hosts to a nearby restaurant, where spirits were lifted and sleep was all but forgotten.

The next day the March shipmates were taken to Nauticus, a naval museum which, besides housing memorabilia, is now the home of the nearly-retired 58,000-ton battleship USS Wisconsin.

One member, Derrick Harman, was present in September 1945 when the Japanese surrender was signed in the USS Missouri, sister ship of the Wisconsin, and this brought back mixed memories.

The party also visited Colonial Williamsburg, where British settlers first landed, and USS Harry S Truman, the world's largest serving aircraft carrier at 100,000 tons.

The climax came on the final evening with a banquet, mementoes and gifts were exchanged.

The party travelled back ready to start saving for next year's event in Las Vegas.

Funeral for Alf

THE funeral has taken place of S/M Alf Woonton, who served as National Council member for many years and was active in the Association until quite recently.

The service, at Parndon Wood Crematorium in Harlow, saw a good turn-out by national and area officials, standards and shipmates.



The Royal Naval Association

Once Navy Always Navy

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- Stand together in unity

How to join

Write to RNA HQ

82 Chelsea Manor Street

London SW3 5QJ

Tel: 020 7352 6764

Fax: 020 7352 7385

www.royal-naval-association.co.uk



MYSTERY PICTURE 154

Name

Address

My answers



NOTICEBOARD

THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES

NAVY NEWS looks back through its pages to recall some of the December headlines of past decades...



● Actress Louise Jameson with mechanical mutts K9 and K39 40 years ago

AN exchange of Victoria Crosses took place between the RN Barracks in Portsmouth and Province House of Nova Scotia, Canada. The medal of William Hall returned to his Nova Scotian home, and the medal won by John Sullivan of HMS Rodney in charge of a landing party in the Crimea came to Portsmouth.

30 years ago

'IT'S Dogtor Who' was the punny headline when actress Louise Jameson introduced co-star K9 to HMS Naiaid's mechanical dog K39, who was built on board during Exercise Ocean Safari in response to the ban on warship pets.

20 years ago

THE 18th-Century offices of Captain Hydrographic Surveying Flotilla in South Yard at Devonport were reported haunted, with disembodied footsteps pacing the upper floor, a sudden chilly drop in temperature and a spirit who was apparently so irritated by the noise of a vacuum cleaner that he would flick the switch off at the wall.

Where are you now?

HMS Challenger 1949-52: We would like to hear from former shipmates of HMS Challenger's World Oceanographical Survey 1950-52. Contact: Henry 'Brummie' Pickering on 0121 474 2718, henrypicking@blueyonder.co.uk or Don 'Doc' Livesy on 01788 890394.

Fast Motor Boat 43957 in Diadem or Ark Royal: The British Military Powerboat Trust have FRM 43957 which started life on cruiser HMS Diadem, 1944-47, then served on HMS Ark Royal in the early 1950s. The Trust are looking for anyone who served in either ship, in whatever capacity, who may have recollections of the fast motor boats or any photographs that will help build a historic collection covering the boat's service. Any costs will be covered. Contact: Richard Hellyer, 22 The Warren, Holbury, Southampton SO45 2QB, tel: 023 8089 0900 or email pathfinder@safemariner.co.uk.

HMS Fisgard 1956: We are trying to trace an old classmate of ours and would be grateful for any information as to his present location. He is Malcolm Alistair Veale from the St Judes area of Plymouth. Joined Fisgard in May 1956 as an Artificer Apprentice. Completed training in 1960 and joined the fishery protection squadron based in Rosyth as a 5th class Electrical Artificer, possibly on HMS Malcolm. Contact Lew Williams at jan_lew27@yahoo.co.uk or write to 24 Cherry Close, Exmouth, Devon EX8 5PR.

HMS Ganges 1965, 76-77 Recruitment, Blake Division Mess 5-6: Looking for any lads from these messes for a reunion. We are looking for Bill Taylor, John Batey, Norm Foster, Robbins, Cant, Cantwell, Pete Comley, and the rest of both classes from 5 Mess, people waiting to hear are: Richard Evans, Andy Beaney, Bryan Pace, Bill Hollis. Last reunion was in October so please don't miss the next one, lads. Please contact Bill Hollis at billh@esc.net.au or write to 4 Florian Street, Christie Downs, South Australia, 5164.

HMS Invincible: Trying to contact any members of the Communications Department of Invincible who served during the Falklands 82 to contact me or to join the association, especially trying to contact RO W. Jones who attended my wedding. Contact Tim Jenkins at 07753 766875 or email gonzo_bignose@centralpets.com or Mick

Kessell at mickkessell@tiscali.co.uk or website: www.freewebs.com/nica82

HMS Kenya: Searching for Philip Adrian Young, born March 12 1936, long lost brother of Robert Young. Nickname within the Navy was Chung. He served onboard HMS Kenya, HMS Lowestoft and HMS Alacrity before changing to a TAS rating between approximately 1955-67. Also played for the RN football team. Last known living in the Portsmouth area. Contact Wendy Oliver at lindsay.oliver@hotmail.co.uk, tel: 07779 122615 or write to 84 Bervyn View, Ellesmere, Shropshire, SY12 0DX.

HMS Modeste (F42): A frigate of the Far East Fleet 1957-59. Seeking any shipmates. Please contact Terry Pound, 25 Howard Oliver House, Harvey Gardens, Hythe, Southampton, Hants, SO45 3LS or tel: 023 8084 3914.

Northwood: I used to work as a German Petty Officer in Northwood, Middlesex at CINCHAN/CINCEASTLANT HQ 1980 to 1983 and became a very good friend of Sarah Jane Holden who worked as a Leading Wren for NATO then. I left the German Navy end of 1983 to work as a shipbroker and unfortunately I lost touch in the early 80s. She got married to a Royal Navy officer, but I do not know her present surname. She must be in the mid 40s now. Contact Volker Milde at Volker.Milde@nord-com.net or write to Gredenstrasse 3a, D-28279 Bremen, Germany.

NPFS: Seeking Lt Maggie Knox formerly of NPFS, believed to be residing in the Portsmouth area. Please contact Father Mark Jackson MA RFA at maundycoottage@onetel.com or tel 07785 713997.

HMS Peacock (P329): Seeking new members from this fast patrol boat from the Hong Kong Flotilla with a view for a reunion in May 2008. Contact Ted Collier, 8 Aston Lane, Remenham Hill, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 3EL or tel: 01491 574241.

HMS Vernon & LSTs: Billy served in Vernon before embarking to the Mediterranean on Warrior and then into Messina, Reggio and Striker. This was in the early 1950s, so if anyone else from that period who served on these LSTs would like to get in touch, please contact Billy Duncan, Chestnut Cottage, 1 Beechgrove, Moffat, Dumfriesshire, DG10 9RS.

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

■ Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to – The Editor, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth. PO1 3HH or email: edit@navynews.co.uk. If you are sending your notice in via email, please include your full address and telephone number.

■ Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.

■ Please send in Reunions at least three months (preferably four) before the month of the event.

■ There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.

■ Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.

■ The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

■ Space does not allow us to accept more than one free insert. Any subsequent notice will have to be paid for at advertising rates.

Deaths

Vice-Admiral Sir Arthur Hezlet DSC, DSO*. Joined the RN aged 13 in 1928; trained at Dartmouth and Greenwich; served in Regulus (China Station); passed Perisher in 1940; sent as relief CO to the Fighting 10th Submarine Flotilla at Malta where he took over Upholder from Lt David Wanklyn VC; temporary CO of Unique, sank the troopship Esperia and awarded DSC; stood in for 'Black' Mackenzie as CO of Ursula; CO of Trident in the Arctic and mentioned in dispatches for the protection of convoy PQ16; in 1942 he began to work with midget submarines for which he devised the Hezlet Rail, to stop men being washed off casings; CO of Tresher taking part in Operation Source, the attack by midget submarines on German ships in Altanford and again mentioned in dispatches. As CO of Trenchant in 1944 in the Straits of Malacca he intercepted U-859 taking ten prisoners from the water and was awarded his first DSO; also conducted the last two-man submarine attack of the war on the Japanese heavy cruiser Ashigana, awarded a Bar to the DSO and the US Legion of Merit. After the war he was CO of the destroyer Scorpion, was captain of the 6th Destroyer Squadron, and captain of the cruiser Newfoundland; Flag Officer Submarines from 1959-61; became Flag Officer Scotland and Northern Ireland; promoted vice-admiral in 1964. The RN's youngest captain at 36 and its youngest admiral at 45. Retiring shortly afterwards he wrote several books including *The Submarine and Sea Power, Aircraft and Sea Power* and the two-volume *World War 2 History of British and Allied Submarine Operations*. November 7. Aged 93.

Capt Spencer Drummond DSC. Entered RN 1936 and served in Glasgow, Hereford, Belvoir, Farndale, Caprice, Cossack, Ceylon, Ark Royal, Cassandra and Tiger. Promoted captain 1966; final post as Commodore HMS Warrior, Northwood. Awarded DSC for his work in the Aegean Campaign 1943, also a Defence Fellow. 1765 and 1785 Club and participated in old comrades associations concerning Belvoir, Cassandra and Cossack. October 12. Aged 85.

Capt Christopher Smith RFA QGM. Educated at Repton and the merchant seamen's school HMS Conway. From Conway he served with a Dutch shipping line and then in the Merchant Navy before joining the RFA in 1961. He obtained his master's ticket in 1965 and subsequently became chief officer of Engadine; awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal for the decisive role he played in the salvage of the stricken merchantman Melpol ablaze and drifting in the Channel in December 1981. Four months later he sailed as second-in-command of Engadine to the Falklands with four Wessex helicopters to provide maintenance and accommodation for ground crew and was berthed in San Carlos Water throughout the period of the intense Argentine air attacks. He was promoted to captain, seeing further service in many theatres of international conflict including the Gulf, Malaysia and Lebanon and retired in 1997 after a 36-year career in the RFA. October 7. Aged 70.

Cdr Harold Graham Spriggs. Joined Dartmouth aged almost 13 in 1925 (the smallest cadet since Admiral Jellicoe). Specialising in Engineering he joined Exeter (South America) as S/Lt in 1933. At the outbreak of war he was sent to assist the Norwegian Resistance; new recruits in converted trawlers; then to supervise the building of ship on the Clyde (Unicorn); next RNAS Anthon where he became Commander AE then Daedalus, Halifar (Malta for two years), Ocean and finally the Admiralty before retirement in 1960. HMS Unicorn Association. October 11. Aged 95.

Geoffrey 'Bruce' Woodcock. Trainee Stoker whilst on board Unicorn 1947 whilst she was in the Reserve Fleet, Plymouth. HMS Unicorn Association. October 8. Aged 79.

Graham 'Tad' Thomas. Fleet CPO WEA. Served 1955-84. After passing out from Fisgard he served in Victorious, Dundas, Londonderry (Borneo crisis), Blake and Birmingham and shore establishments Collingwood, Vernon, Excellent and Osprey, where as part of FOST at Ascension in 1982 he prepared ships heading south. Aged 68.

Cdr Les Inman. Served 1943-47 in Foley, Stevenstone (L16) and LCT 239. 1st Destroyer Flotilla Association. September 27. Aged 82.

Robert Moses. PO Buffer. Served in Serene 1944-47. Chairman and founder of HMS Serene Association. September 8. Aged 87.

Edwin Nicholls. Stoker. Served in Illustrious. Resident of the Royal Alfred Seafarers Society, Banstead. October 7. Aged 77.

David 'Steve' Logan. WOC. Served 1966-87 in Maidstone, Victorious, Sheffield, Illustrious and Nelson. October 14. Aged 60.

Albert 'Bill' Thompson. Chief O/A. Served at Atherstone 1941-45. Veteran St Nazair, North Africa, Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia. October 17. Aged 85.

Les 'Bunny' Williams RM. Served with 40 Commando, formerly A M Commando 1942-46 in Sicily, Italy, Corfu, Albania and Yugoslavia and a member of 1942-46 40 Cdo RM Association. November 2. Aged 86.

John 'Pedlar' Palmer. L/SME(E). Served 1952-64. HMS Wizard and HMS Cadiz Association. HMS Warrior Association (Christmas Island) and HMS Saintes Association. Other ships Vanguard, Forth, Brighton and RNZN Rotohiti. October 10. Aged 76.

Richard 'Dicky' Wincup. RS. Served 1971-93 in Rhyl, Norfolk, Intrepid, Andromeda and Invincible, Commen Northwood, Cyprus and Mercury. Joined Commen Fort Southwick 1996 as a civil servant where he remained through to its current manifestation DESISS Commen Portsmouth. October 22. Aged 54.

Roy Mengham. CMEM. Served in Comus, Forth, Maidstone, Bulwark. Chief Instructor, Fireground Phoenix. July 5 in New Zealand. Aged 73.

William 'Bill' Tart. LS. Served in Redpole (1943-44), Atlantic and Gibraltar convoys, D-Day landings (Gold Beach), Beachy Head, Pacific Fleet (1945-46). Aged 83.

Harry Dennerly. Signalman. HMS Loch Fada Association. September 21.

Lt Cdr Francis John Bloom. Joined as Boy Seaman at 16 in 1942 and served for 35 years. Commanded the Inshore minesweeper Dittisham then 1st Lt Gangas. Also served at St George, Anson, Pembroke, Forth, Ilmington, Tumult, Wildfire, Malcolm, Dryad, Greenwich, Reclaim, Cavington, Monkton, Nurton, Triumph, Fearless and Intrepid. Harbourmaster at Whitstable. Staunch supporter of the Lifeboats, King Georges Fund for Sailors and the Association of Retired Officers. October 23. Aged 81.

Reginald Bennett. CPO RE. Served in Cochrane, Collingwood, Mermaid, Vernon, Newfoundland, Eagle, Excellent, Terror, Gurkha and St Angelo. HMS Comus Comrades Association. November 5. Aged 73.

Alfred Reginald 'Dickie' Davis. Served 1940-46 in Collingwood and Victorious (Arctic convoys). October 31. Aged 89.

Mike Cooper. LA AH2. Served 1956-68 in Victorious, Bulwark and Hermes; Naval Air Stations Lossiemouth, Brawdy and Culdrose also with 849 squadron in Singapore. Aircraft Handlers Association. September 17 in Gibraltar. Aged 66.

Cecil Bernard Thomas. PO Wireman. Served 1940-45 in Tuscan and Queen Elizabeth; British East Indies Fleet. September 13. Aged 88.

SUBMARINERS ASSOCIATION
George H Lawley. Chief Electrical Artificer. Served in Seadevil, Scotsman, Telemachus, Thermopylae, Truncheon, Tactician, Spur, Odin, Subtle, Senecal and Alliance guide. Gosport branch. October 11. Aged 84.

Norman Eric Powlesland. POME. Served in Sanguine, Solent, Trenchant, Tipote and Opossum. Gosport branch. October 13. Aged 77.

E 'Red' Skelton. POME. Served 1948-62 in Telemachus, Finwhale, Thorough, Scorcher and Springer. North East branch. Aged 80.

A E 'Alex' D'Auriol. CPO Stoker. Served 1940-43 in Thunderbolt and Seawolf. Birmingham branch. Aged 94.

C J 'Colin' Mears. ME(1). Served 1963-66 in Astute (1963-65) and Artful (1965-66). Lincoln branch. Aged 64.

O T 'Owen' Hodgetts. LRO(T). Served 1954-63 in Seneschal, Artemis, Thule and Token. Teeside branch. Aged 69.

F 'Fred' Aze. CERA. Served 1952-71 in Sirdar, Seascout, Subtle, Seadevil, Trenchant, Artemis, Acheron and Otter. Plymouth branch. Aged 81.

FISGARD ASSOCIATION
R C 'Bob' Fay. Joined Fisgard 1951 as Series 143. September 28.

Graham 'Tad' Thomas. Fisgard 1955 Series 25. October 12.

John 'Pat' Ennis. Joined Fisgard 1955 Series 25. October 17.

Graham 'Ted' Heath. Joined Fisgard 1952 Series 15. October 20.

LST & LANDING CRAFT ASSOCIATION
E Griffiths. Served LCI(H) 275. June 24.
R G Black. Served with LCM Flotilla 601. August 6 in New Zealand.

W R Jones. Served LBW 12. September 12.

F W Allen DSM. Served LCF 9, LCG(M) 101 and 178. September 22.

A W F Weston. Served LCAs and LSI Ben My Chree. September 23.

F A Collins DSM. Served LCA Flotilla 125, LCTs, LSI(S) Princess Josephine Charlotte. September 24.

H A Streeting. Served LCT 1058. September 25.

L C Dore. Served LST 3516 HMS Striker. September 26.

J Simpson. Served LCAs and LCMs. September 28.

G H Armon. Served LCT's 712 and 2191. September 30.

ALGERINES ASSOCIATION
Ron Laing. Ldg/Sto Mec. Served in Pickle. August 16. Aged 83.

Ray Simmonds. AB. Associate member. Served in Lidd-Sutton. October 27. Aged 83.

Sid Rolfe. AB. Served in Espiegle. November 2. Aged 81.

ASSOCIATION OF RN OFFICERS
Lt Cdr P Aylwin. Served: Jervis, Pelican, Corinthian, Contest, Victorious, Mars, Centaur and Royal Prince.

Lt E Bristow. DSM. Served: Glasgow, Mercury, Ricasso, Eagle, Forest Moor and President.

Cdr C A Brown. Served: Calcutta, Colossus, Hornbill, Fulmar, Sanderling, Goldcrest and Albion.

Cdr C E Emerson DSC. Served: Weston, Vernon, Sheffield, Marlborough, Liverpool, Newcastle, Osprey, Vigilant and Vernon.

Lt Cdr F J Hackney. Served: Unicorn, Victorious, Raleigh, Gambia, Hartland Point, Sea Eagle, Obdurate, Paladin and Victory.

Lt R C Hill. Served: Devonshire, Cossack, Dolphin, Agincourt, Vernon and Diligence.

Surg Lt Cdr A McEwen-Smith VRD RNR S/Lt N E Vale RNRV

Capt G R Villar DSC. Served: Glasgow, Active, Excellent, Chequers, St Angelo, Gosamer, Saker and Excellent.

ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION
Charles 'Happy' Day. Leading Airman Pilot's Mate. 812 an 805 Naval Air Squadrons Glory and Ocean (Korea 1951-53) also St George, Gamecock, Wetherby branch; also 14th Carrier Air Group Association. August 17. Aged 77.

Les Haynes. King's Shropshire Light Infantry. Associate member Ludlow and District branch. September 28. Aged 73.

Neville Garlick. Air Fitter FAA. Served 1944-46 in South Atlantic and Indian Ocean repairing aircraft (mainly 'stringbags' and 'hellcats') on carriers. Vice chairman Kendal branch. October 2. Aged 81.

Richard 'Dick' Henry King. Served 1940-46 as Seaman in the Patrol Service on minesweepers (MMS and BYMS); his last ship was BYMS 2007. Standard bearer for Thetford branch for the last 15 years. September 23. Aged 86.

Norman Vaisey RM. Served 1943-47. Dursley and District branch. September 14.

The Rev David Parker. Life member on HQ Roll and Padre to Dursley and District branch. September 18.

George 'Ginger' Quinn. Served 1937-46 in Ark Royal, Kimberley and Tobruk. Founder member of Windsor branch 1957. October 8. Aged 88.

Rose Kirk. Associate member Thurock branch. Widow of Charles Kirk DSM. October 22.

Lt Cdr Ronald 'Ron' James Gee VRD RNR. FAA Observer. Enlisted 1939; served Harrier, Daedalus, Boxer and Blackcap. Later TS Blackcap (Birkenhead Sea Cadets). Vice president of Birkenhead RNA. September 13. Aged 86.

Gordon 'Tommy' Tucker. Writer. Served 1942-46 in Royal Arthur, Pembroke, Rajah (Atlantic and Pacific), President and Baldr. Founder member of Kingston branch commissioned in 1984, secretary for 23 years and lately chairman. Member of many other associations. October 28. Aged 83.

Ronald 'Tug' Wilson. Served in Whistledwind, Osprey, Pembroke, Pelican and Defender. Previous minutes secretary Colchester branch. October 9. Aged 75.

Kenneth Savidge. Beccles branch. September 22. Aged 69.

Edwin Ball. Beccles branch. October 7. Aged 89.

Alan O'Reilly. Beccles branch. October 26. Aged 71.

Lt Cdr John Dennis. Shipwright. Served 1943-78 in Victorious, St Vincent, Triumph, Fearless, Phoenix, Thunderer, Forth and Safeguard. Founder member Aquitaine branch. November 4. Aged 79.

Ft Lt Doug Mayo RAF. Associate member Aquitaine branch. Served 1940-45 Africa, Italy, France and Germany. October 24 in Sigoules, Dordogne. Aged 87.

Reunions

DECEMBER 2007
M2 Submarine: Commemorative service for the lost crew of the M2 submarine at St Andrew's Avalanche Memorial Church, Southwell, Portland on Sunday December 9 at 3pm. Organised by the Nautical Archaeology Society and the Dorset branch of the Submariners Association. Telephone Mark Beattie-Edwards for more information: 023 9281 8419.

FEBRUARY 2008
Fishery Protection? Cod War? Were you involved in these? Would you like to meet your old shipmates? The warmth and camaraderie of a reunion and social weekend in the coldest part of the winter, has been designed for those ex shipmates who don't have their own reunion to attend. Those involved with Fishery Protection especially during the Cod War are invited to attend and have a display. What do you have to put on show? February 8-11 2008. Mill Rytte Holiday Village on Hayling Island, well known for Naval reunions and therefore booking fast. Coach trip Saturday, followed by an Up Spirits and gala dinner. Remembrance Service Sunday, another Up Spirits. Then coach trip or Sod's Opera. Further details from Mike Crowe, RN Shipmates, 7 Heath Road, Sandown, Isle of Wight. PO36 8PG or mike@rneba.org.uk.

MARCH 2008
RN Engineer Association: 32nd annual dinner/dance on March 15 at the Nautical Club, Birmingham. Details from Bob Styants at bobstyants@btinternet.com or tel: 0121 422 4115.

HMS Illustrious Association (Northern Branch): Reunion at Hacketts York House Hotel, Blackpool, March 28-31. Open to anyone who is interested. Gala dinner on the Saturday night. For more information and booking form contact Ron 'Dixie' Dean on 01204 300162 or 37 Chetwyn Avenue, Bromley Cross, Bolton, Lancashire, BL7 9BN.

848 NAS, Malaya Association: Reunion on March 29. Any former members of the early Gosport Heli units (ZMU 705NAS) of 1951 are invited. Still seeking personnel of the 1950s squadron. Contact the secretary, Les Smith on 01584 711910 or Ray Gilder on 02476 445913.

APRIL 2008
HMS Collingwood Association: Tenth anniversary reunion at the Grand Hotel, Scarborough, April 11-14. All members and partners welcome. Programme includes coach trip with buffet lunch, dinner followed by live entertainment on two evenings, remembrance service. Visit our website at www.hmscollingwoodassociation.co.uk or contact our secretary Bill Gee at 123 Roman Road, Jarrow, Tyne & Wear, NE32 4SJ.

HMS Decoy Association: Reunion in Blackpool, April 18-20. New faces from all commissions welcome. Contact Malcolm 'Dobbo' Dobson at dobbo.exrn@btinternet.com, tel 01502 677395 or write to 1 The Villas, Rectory Road, Aldeby, Nr Beccles. Suffolk. NR34 0BJ.

HMS Peacock (P329): Annual reunion at the Wroxton House Hotel, Wroxton St Mary, Banbury, Oxfordshire, April 25-27. Contact Ted Collier, 8 Aston Lane, Remenham Hill, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 3EL or tel: 01491 574241.

MAY 2008
LST & Landing Craft Association: 21st annual reunion at the Royal Court Hotel, Keresley, Coventry, May 23-27. All welcome. Details from Mike Cresswell at mike@gamrudding.freeseve.co.uk, tel: 07717 038300 or write to 1 Gamrudding, Green Lane, North Duffield, Selby, YO8 5RR.

September 2008
HMS Ark Royal Communications Branch (1973-77): Seventh reunion takes place in September 2008. All sparkers/buntlings/golies from that period are welcome. For further details please contact Jeremy Smith at jeremy.smith@glencore.co.uk, tel: 020 7412 3411 or visit the website at www.groups.yahoo.com/group/hms-ark-royal/.

Friends of HMS Vidal: 2008 reunion September 6 at the Burlington Palm Hotel, Great Yarmouth. Contact David Parker on 020 8648 0160 or david@parker1938.freeseve.co.uk for more details. All commissions, and all ranks, welcome.

Friends of HMS Crane 1943-62 will hold their tenth reunion at the Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth, September 12-13. Contact Nobby Hall on 01797 364633 for details.

HMS Invincible Communications Association (Falklands 82): Second reunion will be held on September 27 2008 in Portsmouth. Contact Tim Jenkins at gonzo_bignose@centralpets.com or Mick Kessell at mickkessell@tiscali.co.uk or website www.freewebs.com/nica82.

Sports lottery

October 20: £5,000 – Lt Cdr J Milsom, CTS RAF Cottesmore; £1,500 – LALOMMW L Untulis, FASFLot WMO; £500 – Sgt D R Claridge, RM Band Portsmouth.

October 27: £5,000 – Lt A M Claridge, MDHU Portsmouth; £1,500 – Mne2 A W Heywood, 40 Cdo RM; £500 – Mne R J Greenhalgh, 42 Cdo RM.

November 3: £5,000 – LA(SE) B C Roberts, RNAS Yeovilton; £1,500 – CPOMEM(M) A M Churchill, MOD Abbeywood; £500 – CPO(UW) A M Dennis, HMS Montrose.

November 10: £5,000 – Lt Cdr C J Barber, JSCSC; £1,500 – Lt S Chattejee, FDS HQ Portsmouth; £500 – CPOMA J R Cook, HMS Rooke.

Ask Jack

899 NAS: Trying to track down an officer, Lt Cdr Mike Broadwater, who served in 899 NAS during the Falklands conflict, and wondered if anyone out there could put me in touch with him. Specifically, he was involved in action with Lt Alan Curtis (MIA May 6 1982) on May 1 1982 against Argentine Canberra bombers. I am keenly interested in aviation and military history, and would like to talk to him more about this incident. I have contacted both the FAA Officers Association, who informed me he is not a member, and the Royal Navy Historic Flight who do not have current details for him. The last known record of him was that he piloted the RN Historic Flight Sea Hawk in 1989. Contact Steven Beeny at steve@nazastudios.com or write to 14 Garrison Loop, Ladera Ranch, CA 92694, USA.

HMS Chevron: Looking for any pictures of my dad and his mates/crew as he lost all his and is devastated. His 70th birthday is coming up and I would really like to surprise him with some photos. His name is Joseph Frank Spencer Hill (known as Joe). He was originally from Reading but settled in Swansea. He mainly served on Chevron but I think did a brief spell on another couple of ships (Maidenhead). I know he spent quite a bit of time on the archipelago islands. He would have enlisted around 1953 or 54. Contact Malcolm Hill at malcolmw.hill@btinternet.com or write to 118 Siloh Road, Swansea, SA1 2PJ.

WW2 British Convoy Escorts: Off Star Point, Devon on July 2 1940, during part of Convoy OA176 from London to Glasgow, my dad's ship Aeneas (Blue Funnel Line) being the largest vessel and second ship in line ahead of the convoy

Tragic error led to safer navigation

Battleship's bell returns to help with celebration

ONE of the icons of the Royal Navy's 20th Century history is this month back near the waters that once devoured it.

The bell of battleship HMS Prince of Wales has been loaned to the people of Malaysia to celebrate their 50th anniversary of independence – and to commemorate the ties between the two countries.

Royal Navy divers recovered the bell from the wreck of the leviathan five years ago amid growing fears of plunder by unscrupulous souvenir hunters and scrap metal merchants.

Prince of Wales and the battlecruiser Repulse both fell victim to Japanese bombers on December 10 1941. They sank in international waters off the coast of the Malay peninsula, taking 764 men down with them.

More than six decades on, the bell is acting as a centrepiece during three weeks of independence anniversary events, touring the country in a series of exhibitions including LIMA 2007 in Langkawi, one of the world's largest nautical trade fairs.

Commemorations reach a peak with a naval review and memorial service over the wreck site on December 10, when divers from the Royal Malaysian Navy will attach a plaque to the sea bed alongside the Prince of Wales' wreck.

Rear Admiral Alan Massey, Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, presented the bell to the Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid bin Syed Jaafar Albar during a visit to London.

"The bell returns briefly to Malaysia in a gesture of friendship and partnership between the peoples of the UK and Malaysia to reinforce our awareness of the sacrifices made by the men of both navies," Admiral Massey said.

After its tour the bell will return to the UK where it is in the care of the Royal Naval Museum.

THREE hundred years after one of the gravest peacetime nights in Royal Navy history, sailors returned to the spot which changed the art of navigation.

On October 22 1707, Sir Cloudesley Shovell drove his flagship HMS Association and three other vessels on to the Western Rocks in the Scilly Isles.

Shovell was one of the most respected and courageous naval leaders of the day but he fell victim to bad weather, bad navigation and bad luck.

Around 1,600 men were killed when HM Ships Association, Eagle, Romney and Firebrand were dashed on the rocks as their navigators miscalculated their longitude – and hence their position.

Shovell's body was later washed ashore

Out of the tragedy – the worst peacetime disaster in the Royal Navy's history – came the device which revolutionised navigation ... eventually.

Parliament passed the Longitude Act in 1714 offering £20,000 – more than £6m today – to whoever solved the problem of accurately

measuring longitude.

It was half a century before the Admiralty (reluctantly) accepted John Harrison's marine chronometer as a tool with which to achieve an accurate measurement of longitude – thanks in part to some persuasion by the king (the Navy never paid the £20,000 reward originally offered, however).

Scilly Islanders have staged a series of talks, exhibitions and services to commemorate the disaster – and its subsequent impact upon the world of seafaring.

The Association's wreck was found by a naval sub aqua team four decades ago, and it was over the remains of the man o'war that HMS Ledbury arrived on October 22 2007 for a service of remembrance.

The Portsmouth-based minehunter was joined by island dignitaries, Chaplain of the Fleet the Venerable John Green and the Naval Regional Commander for Wales and West England, Cdre Jamie Miller.

Cdre Miller, a survivor of the loss of HMS Coventry in the Falklands, said it was only right that today's sailors honoured Shovell and his fleet.

"From the depths of this disaster came a scientific discovery of epic proportions and one which changed the way we navigated forever – probably saving thousands of lives," he added.

Ledbury spent two days off the Scillies, with boats from St Mary's ferrying islanders out to tour the Hunt-class warship.

The ship has moved on a fair bit from Harrison's chronometer in terms of navigating.

Before heading to the Scillies, the minehunter became the latest recipient of the WECDIS electronic charting system which is rapidly becoming standard across the Fleet.

It means navigational errors as well as the heavy time load demanded by working with paper charts should become a thing of the past, although navigators continue to practise traditional skills such as dead reckoning and astro-navigation.

● *HMS Ledbury honours the men who died when Sir Cloudesley Shovell's flotilla was wrecked in 1707*

Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Wenham, (FRPU Whale Island)



Fishery ship takes a battering

MINEHUNTER HMS Quorn has spent the autumn renewing bonds with the past and present and forging bonds for the future – mostly in rotten weather.

The ship sailed for Le Havre for a weekend break from fishery protection duties, which allowed a pilgrimage to the battlefields and beaches of Normandy.

The first port of call was Pegasus Bridge, where the first British troops set foot in France in the small hours of June 6 1944.

Among the men landing that morning was glider pilot Capt William Barrie DFC, great uncle of Quorn's gunnery officer Lt Jonathan Fletcher.

The officer found his relative's name in a book of remembrance inside a replica Horsa glider at the Pegasus Bridge museum.

The seizure of the bridge was a precursor to the amphibious landings on the Normandy coast.

And so the ship's company moved on to Arromanches where

the remains of the Mulberry harbour – used to support the enormous invasion effort – are still visible.

It allowed today's sailors to pay respects to their forebears – the previous HMS Quorn fell victim to a German 'human torpedo' in the Seine Bay.

Quorn was protecting the Operation Neptune re-supply convoys when struck on August 3 1944, sinking in little more than a minute, taking all but 36 of her 165-strong ship's company down with her.

Today's Quorn left Le Havre and ploughed straight into a Force 7 – unpleasant in any warship, but especially in a small Hunt class.

Unpleasant as it was for her 44 crew, it was especially unpleasant for their families who were joining the

ship for passage to Portsmouth.

The seas were thankfully calmer for an affiliates day in the Solent.

Quorn treated the mayoral party of Melton Mowbray, Melton's youth mayor (the town has a youth council), two QARNNS nurses, and 16 students from Welbeck College, and council officials to a display including fire-fighting, a Lynx fly-past and exercises with HMS Cattistock.

Bad weather is not the preserve of the Channel. The North Sea can be even rougher – as the Quorn chaps found the week after their battering out of Le Havre.

The ship was due to continue her work with affiliates by carrying soldiers from the Defence Animal Centre in Melton to Newcastle.

But the weather proved too

rough for the troops to even join Quorn – though it didn't, of course, prevent the ship from sailing.

After what was described as a "tough passage" with true RN understatement, the ship found shelter in the heart of Newcastle.

The visit coincided with the Great North Run – and allowed the ship's company to cheer on navigator Lt Gareth Shrubsole's brother Duncan, who completed the race to raise cash for Crisis and Marie Curie Cancer Care.

Then it was back into the unforgiving North Sea, this time to relieve HMS Tyne on Operation Shark (see page 6) – a combined exercise with the Dutch Coast Guard to catch fishermen breaking the law.

By swapping boarding officers – Lt Fletcher joined the Barend Biesheuvel while his counterpart joined Quorn – both ships could conduct boardings on either side of the line which divides UK and Netherlands fishing limits.





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● *Wildlife is a big selling point for tourism in the Falklands (above, king penguins), as are the battlefield tours of the 1982 conflict (left, on Mount Harriet) – and the detritus of war does not seem to unduly disturb the local fauna (below, Pebble Island)*

Pictures: Cpl Richard Cave RLC

Anniversary pilgrims welcomed in islands

AROUND 250 'pilgrims' have returned from an emotional trip to the Falkland Islands to mark the 25th anniversary of the conflict.

War veterans and family members of those who lost their lives in the South Atlantic took part in the pilgrimage, which ran from November 6 to 13.

With hotel space at a premium, many visitors were accommodated by local families.

Visits were made and services held at the main battlefields, and wildlife trips were also laid on, to Sea Lion and Pebble Islands.

The main commemoration service was held on Remembrance Sunday at Christ Church Cathedral, followed by a ceremony at the Cross of Sacrifice.

New patrol ship HMS Clyde has been heavily involved in services and wreath-laying ceremonies for people and ships lost in 1982.

She hosted 30 veterans over the wreck of HMS Antelope in San Carlos, and held another vigil at the point HMS Glamorgan was struck by an Exocet missile, killing 14 of her ship's company.

While open to visitors during her stint in Stanley, Clyde attracted 270 visitors – equal to one-tenth of the Islands' population.

The pilgrimage was organised by SAMA82 predominantly for holders of the South Atlantic Medal, and places were specifically reserved for Combat Stress-registered patients.

Falklands looks to the future

AS A year-long programme of commemorative events draws to a close, what lies ahead for the people of the Falkland Islands?

In the decade before Argentinian troops invaded in 1982 the economy of the remote British territory was in poor shape, and showing few encouraging signs.

The population was around 1,800, and the prospect of working and living away from the islands was an increasingly attractive option.

The main industry was still the export of wool, which left the islands vulnerable to global economic changes.

In 1975 British Foreign Secretary James Callaghan instigated an economic survey which was published the following year as the Shackleton Report, but by the spring of 1982 there had been little sign of progress.

The shock of invasion brought wider issues into sharp focus – it made no sense to sacrifice lives over a cause then allowing the prize to quietly rot away.

The Shackleton Report was updated in the aftermath of the war – which itself brought some immediate economic benefits, such as the building of the new Mount Pleasant military complex.

This in turn allowed wide-bodied jets to fly into the Falklands for the first time.

The Shackleton Report prompted the creation of the Falkland Islands Development Corporation, and brought about a shift in emphasis, away from dependence on agriculture – though there are still more than half a million sheep running around.

The declaration of a 150-mile fisheries management zone four years after the war opened up a new and highly lucrative source of income – fishing licences.

Fisheries has become easily the main moneyspinner, bringing in over £16m in 2006, compared to around £4m from agriculture – although the fishing sector has yielded as much as £26m a year.

Much of the income is from squid fishing, although hake, blue whiting and hoki are also present.

Another growth sector is tourism, not yet so much in terms of occupying beds (of which there are relatively few) but from the visit to the capital Stanley by cruise liners.

Falklands wildlife is a huge draw, be it the five varieties of penguins which cannot fail to enchant (despite the fishy smell) or the marine mammals which bask, bicker or sport around the coastal waters, from sea lions to whales.

When all the hard figures are



FALKLANDS 25

totted up, the islands are just about self-sufficient in all areas – except defence (although nearly five per cent of the islands' gross domestic product goes into the defence pot).

Indeed, a visit to the Falkland Islands today confounds those who see them as God-forsaken bare rocks marooned in a turbulent sea – although the turbulent sea bit is pretty much spot-on.

The population is now around 3,000, two-thirds of whom live in Stanley, and there is a palpable sense of optimism.

Walking around the capital's peaceful streets, acknowledging the greetings from total strangers, one gets the sense of a tight-knit, burgeoning and confident community – with every reason to feel that way.

The government is a lean, flexible machine – eight elected (independent) councillors handle legislative matters through the Legislative Council bar defence and external affairs, although approval must be gained from the Queen.

So if an individual wanted to raise a matter on energy policy or transport, he or she is quite likely to bump into the councillor with that portfolio in Stanley while shopping.

Other initiatives also promise more benefits.

New technology has allowed the Sand Bay wind farm to start harvesting some serious juice from the notorious Falklands gusts, and the installation is now providing around a quarter of Stanley's power requirements, cutting the need for diesel generators.

And there are still high hopes for a hugely lucrative oil strike off the islands, which could be pumped into tankers and shipped abroad via floating platforms, thereby avoiding the need for ugly and unpopular shore facilities.

For more information, see www.falklandislands.com or www.falklands.gov.fk



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around the units

CADETS from Walton-on-the-Naze unit joined Army colleagues for a day's full-bore shooting at ranges near Colchester.

The Sea Cadets then hosted C Company Essex Army Cadets for a day of power boating around Titchmarsh Marina.

S/Lt (SCC) Gary Dodd RNR, CO of the unit, said such exchange days were useful as the cadets had slightly different skill sets, and they had the chance to try something new without travelling far.

CADETS from the Petersfield ATC, 1927 Sqn, have become the first air cadets to use the **National Sea Cadet training centre** at HMS Raleigh in Cornwall.

The 13 cadets relished the opportunity to see something of the Navy, including a tour of Devonport Naval Base.

KEIGHLEY cadets travelled to the island of Mull for a character-building training week.

Staying at the Tavool House Outdoor Activity Centre, the 11 cadets tried hill-climbing, abseiling, kayaking and camping out, among other activities.

The only complaint about the trip, funded by a £5,000 grant from the Awards for All foundation, concerned the ever-present clouds of midges.

ONE of the cadets aboard RFA Largs Bay on passage to London (see page 41) was LC George Whitfield, of **Southwark** unit.

George (15) spent much of his summer holiday on Corps duty, first in charge of younger cadets at a summer camp at HMS Inskip near Preston, then at HMS Gannet on engineering training, all the while spending weekends working hard on drill routines.

He took part in the SeaCadetFest at Lakeside shopping centre in Essex, then turned his attention to the Trafalgar Day parade in London.

MEMBERS of HMS Ark Royal's marine engineering department has helped the St John's School Combined Cadet Force by creating a classroom training aid.

The team, led by the carrier's CO Capt Mike Mansergh, modified a scrapped Honda 125cc motorbike engine, with CPO Ralph Brennan painstakingly sectioning the engine to allow its innards to be seen while it is turned by hand.

THERE was a double cause for celebration when **Wallasey** unit picked up two prizes at the Vauxhall Griffin community awards.

The unit as a whole won a £10,000 grant to improve facilities at headquarters, while PO Marie Pagett won a new category, that for the Cheshire Young Volunteer of the Year.

TWO London Area cadets are the first in the country to gain Edexcel's BTEC First Diploma in Engineering (Maintenance) through the Cadet Vocational Qualifications Organisation (CVQO).

Matthew Ball, from West Ham, and Christopher Bevan, from Thurrock (both 17), took the internationally-recognised qualification – which is equivalent to four A*-C grade GCSEs – in their own time.

Their certificates were presented by the Lord Mayor of London on World Maritime Day on board HQS Wellington in London.

MATT Warwick, a former Marine Cadet with the Windsor and Eton detachment, was awarded the King's Badge for 935 Troop – the royal insignia is given to the best all-round marine in each senior squad as it passes out, and is worn throughout that person's career.

around the units



● Cadets demonstrated their boat-handling skills on the water at the SeaCadetFest at Lakeside shopping centre

Gun run at open day

CARDIFF cadets performed their Field Gun Run during an anniversary event when the gates of the city's docks were opened to the public.

Associated British Ports split the proceeds of the day between the cadets and the local Mission to Seafarers.

The crew of the Cardiff tug Bargarth, operated by Svitzer marine, also donated their overtime pay for the day, which swelled the donation to the cadets to an impressive £2,600.



● Oban cadets at Nelson's monument on Trafalgar Day

Oban visits first monument

TRAFALGAR Day saw Oban's new Sea Cadet Unit celebrating Trafalgar day by holding a Colours ceremony at the Nelson monument in Taynuilt.

It is claimed that this monument was the first of its kind, erected to commemorate the death of Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar.

At its base there is a poignant inscription – dated 1805, it is a reminder of not only the wide popularity of Nelson, but also the many Scots sailors who participated in the battle.

Following the ceremony, unit chaplain the Rev Kit Jarmin

conducted a brief service. The unit felt it was a fitting way to celebrate one of the Navy's key dates, and CO Ewan McCuish is keen to make it an annual event.

The unit also attended Remembrance Day ceremonies in the town – the first time in 40 years that the Corps has been represented.

Having paid tribute at the war memorial, the cadets spent the afternoon at the new Caledonian MacBrayne ferry terminal, where they honoured the memory of the merchant seamen who sailed from the town during World War 2.

When Wandsworth Council planned to stage a ceremony for new British citizens to take place on October 21 it seemed appropriate to have Naval input.

So the Wandsworth, Chelsea and Fulham unit was asked if they could add the Nelson touch on Trafalgar Day to the citizenship ceremony.

A group of 25 cadets answered the call, taking on various roles, including some dressed in period costume and armed themselves with muskets and cutlasses.

Junior cadets dressed as powder monkeys hoisted Nelson's famous "England expects..." signal.

Corps goes in shop window

CUSTOMERS at the Lakeside Centre in Essex found the Sea Cadets in the shop window during a weekend 'SeaCadetFest'.

With the emphasis on fun and getting involved, 200 Sea and Marine Cadets showed what they have learned and involved shoppers in their activities.

Visitors to the centre had the chance to brush up on first aid skills, pick up the basics of marine engineering and get made up with camouflage face paint.

Those brave enough to get up on their feet to learn the sailors' hornpipe included members of Lakeside's management team and Mark Dover, from Time FM, who was compère for the weekend.

The band from High Wycombe unit played throughout both days, and there was a unique drill display set to music from the movies.

Out on the lake cadets showed their prowess in power boats, sailing dinghies, canoes and rowing boats.

The Royal Marines brought along their climbing tower, while Sea Cadets prepared meals in a field kitchen alongside.

The event was supported by Liberty International plc, which owns the centre.

"Given its location in the South East and the centre's particular



● Band members from TS Jaguar, the High Wycombe unit, entertain shoppers at the Lakeside Centre in Essex

facilities, Lakeside offered us an exceptional platform on which to show off just a little of what we have to offer," said Melanie Bowran, Director of Communications at the Marine Society & Sea Cadets.

"I'm delighted so many shoppers took the opportunity to take part in all the fun.

"Local units have seen a significant upturn in recruitment in recent weeks."

Plans are already in hand for similar events at MetroCentre in Gateshead and Chapelfield Shopping Centre in Norwich during 2008, and the Corps hopes to return to Lakeside in 2009.

Nelsonian welcome Crunch time in Pringle contest

Unit CO Lt (SCC) Don Holland RNR assisted Cllr Stuart Thom, the Mayor of Wandsworth, in presenting certificates to each of the new British citizens.

Lt Holland said: "The historical significance was as important to my cadets as it was to these new British citizens."

A TOTAL of 17 teams of Royal Marine Cadets competed over a weekend at Lymington for the Pringle Trophy, with **Charterhouse** School taking the overall honours.

The first day focused on basic military skills on Woodbury Common, near the Commando Training Centre, and the second day included the endurance course, drill and orienteering competitions – all designed to promote teamwork as well as personal development.

Bradfield College finished the weekend a close second to Charterhouse.

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SEA CADETS

Trafalgar Day spent under sail

THE fledgling Warsash unit enjoyed a few days in the spotlight when the Corps' own square-rigger paid a visit to the Hamble.

Cadets from TS Tormentor, along with colleagues and staff from the Romsey and Southampton units, toured the TS Royalist on the Thursday evening.

The following day Warsash welcomed guests on board to a buffet reception, organised with much help from the sailing ship's long-serving chef John.

Saturday brought crowds of onlookers to the pontoon in order to take a closer look at the impressive ship, but for most cadets the highlight came on Sunday.

In glorious weather the Royalist slipped into the Solent, with guests taking turns to steer.

The work carried out by cadets – average age 14 – on the masts and spars impressed the guests.

And members of the unit could not think of a better way of spending Trafalgar Day than sailing a square-rigged ship.

Louise on disc

FOLKESTONE cadet Louise Orfila features on a new Remembrance Day CD recorded in Dover by the Central Band of the Royal British Legion.

Louise (15) recorded her own song, *The Place*, which tells of a soldier in his trench, thinking of home and loved ones just before a battle.

The CD is available by calling 01304 239356, or email clovellyrecordings@hotmail.com



● CADETS from Biggleswade spent a week learning watercraft skills at the SCC Training Centre North West Area boat station, TS Palatine, near Rochdale. The picture shows ACs Phil Warren and Adam White mastering the art of Bosun sailing

Regatta title is three-way tie

THREE areas shared the honours at the National Combined Regatta at the ExCel Centre in London.

All areas had sent teams for the fiercely-fought competition,

and when the judges totted up the scores they declared that Northern Area, Northern Ireland and South West Area were joint winners.

Category wins in the independent disciplines were:

- Canoeing: South West Area
- Pulling: Northern Area
- Boat-handling: Southern Area.

There was also a heavyweight skirmish on the South Coast, where South West Area snatched the title from defending champions Southern Area in the National Sailing Regatta.

The start of racing was delayed

Abingdon host district parade

ABINGDON unit hosted the annual Ox and Bucks District Trafalgar Day parade at Dalton Barracks.

High Wycombe unit provided a marching band, and Cdre Alistair Halliday took the salute at the march-past.

Cdre Halliday said he was honoured to have been invited to the event, as he had been brought up in Abingdon.

Yorkshire units head for Filey

FILEY had the honour of hosting the North and East Yorkshire District Trafalgar Day parade.

The coastal unit providing accommodation for the officers running the event and training facilities for the Guard.

The cadets, led by the York Sea Cadet Band, paraded through Filey to St Oswald's Parish Church for a special service, led by the Rev Mary Williams.

On their return to the unit Inspecting Officer Cdre Paul Sutermeister – who is also the chairman of the York unit – took the salute as the parade passed along the old Victorian Crescent.

Bob dined out as retirement nears

HINCKLEY unit used its Trafalgar Night dinner as a chance to 'dine out' one of its senior officers, Lt (SCC) Bob Bailey RNR, who retires at the end of this year.

The unit wished Bob a long and happy retirement.

Other guests at the dinner were the Mayor of Hinckley and Bosworth, Cllr Keith Lynch, and the speech was given by the Leader of the council, Cllr David Bill, who attended the same school as Nelson.

Around 75 cadets and students paraded through the town centre on Trafalgar Day itself, with a service being held at the Hinckley Temple of the Salvation Army.

Global commuter visits islands unit

NEXT time you are stuck in rush-hour traffic or squeezed into a crowded train, spare a thought for Lochaber unit instructor Miriam Iorweth.

Not for her the daily grind – her commute takes her right around the planet.

First she goes to RAF Brize Norton to take a flight to the Falkland Islands, stopping off at Ascension Island.

Once at Mount Pleasant, she has a brief break before boarding the ex-Northern Lighthouse Board ship Pharos for the final leg to her 'office'.

Miriam works for the Falkland Island Trust, running their museum on South Georgia and tending the grave of Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton.

As a new instructor, Miriam

was keen to maintain links with the Corps, so her CO Derrick Warner put her in touch with her new 'local' unit in the Falklands, just 1,000 miles or so away from her home.

She called in on the unit on a recent stop-over, spending an evening chatting with members about how they do things and exchanging cap tallies.

"While there are lots of differences between the two units, there are also lots of similarities, and it is great to have made contact with our friends in the South Atlantic," said Derrick.

"They have been tremendous hosts, and I would like to thank them very much."

Lochaber is currently seeking adults to help as instructors for senior and junior sections – the unit is growing at a rapid rate, and there is an urgent need for adults aged 18 or over to help out.

There is no need for a military background or sailing expertise – "you just need to have a passion for encouraging young people to achieve their full potential," said Derrick.

For more details, contact Derrick at 01397 712605.

Hereford: small but dedicated

NUMBERS may be small at Hereford, but they make up for it with commitment.

Earlier this year a group of six cadets undertook the physical and expedition sections of the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Awards, which enabled two of them to complete the Bronze.

Along the way they entered the district ET challenge – which they won.

Representing Severn District in the Area ET challenge, they almost repeated their success, eventually finishing a very close second.

And ten cadets took part in a sailing course run by PO Taylor – also from Hereford – at the local LEA outdoor education centre, and all gained RYA sailing qualifications, from Stage I to Stage III.

around the units

WEST Wales cadets took six out of the eight trophies at the South West Area Shoot and Swim competition at HMS Raleigh, as well as numerous individual medals.

The units representing West Wales were Port Talbot, Neath, Swansea, Llanelli, Pembroke Dock and Fishguard.

West Wales District Officer Lt Cdr (SCC) W Alan Thomas said: "Our cadets put in a tremendous effort in bringing back the swimming and shooting trophies to Wales, fighting off extremely stiff competition from the other eight Districts in the South West Area."

"I am extremely proud of their effort and enthusiasm."

THE captain of the Northampton unit's senior boys football team, POC Jack Mitchell, has been appointed Lord Lieutenant's Cadet for the county of Northamptonshire.

Jack (16) has recently qualified as an RYA dinghy sailing instructor, and was the Mayor of Northampton's cadet last year.

METHIL and District unit have held their annual mess dinner at their HQ at Methil Docks.

Principal guest was Tricia Marwick MSP, and also invited was Flt Lt Janet Brown of Leven Air Training Corps.

Members and guests enjoyed a top-notch five-course meal, thanks to the unit's own award-winning chef, CI Alan Innes, who has won the Scottish Care Chef of the Year title twice and has also been part of the Scottish Culinary Training Squad.

Alan teaches Methil cadets about food hygiene and catering, among other subjects.

TAMWORTH and Lichfield unit TS Fort Grange has been presented with a certificate granting them the Freedom of Tamworth.

During the same evening – the unit's annual Royal Navy Parade – Cdr Neil Hinch presented POC Dawn Bamfield with a bouquet of flowers and a tot of rum to celebrate her 18th birthday on that day.

around the units



● Admiral of the Fleet Sir Julian Oswald at the Warwickshire Trafalgar Day parade

Scared of water? Not us!

SEA Cadets are not afraid of a little bit of water – even if it is 2ft of floodwater.

When the Stratford-on-Avon unit TS Gurkha was inundated in July, it was suggested they might be too busy clearing up and sorting out paperwork to host the Warwickshire District Trafalgar Day parade.

But the unit was determined not to be beaten, and when the day dawned bright and sunny, they welcomed almost 200 cadets, including a district guard and the

massed bands of the Redditch and Sutton Coldfield units.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Julian Oswald took the salute, and as usual spoke to as many cadets and families as possible.

AC Rebecca Nadolski, the Mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon's Cadet, also took her place with the VIPs.

Although insurance has covered much of the damage, the unit's minibus was written off, so a fund-raising campaign has been launched to pay for a replacement.



● The Caledonian Canal cadet flotilla sets out from Laggan Locks

Lots of locks and lochs

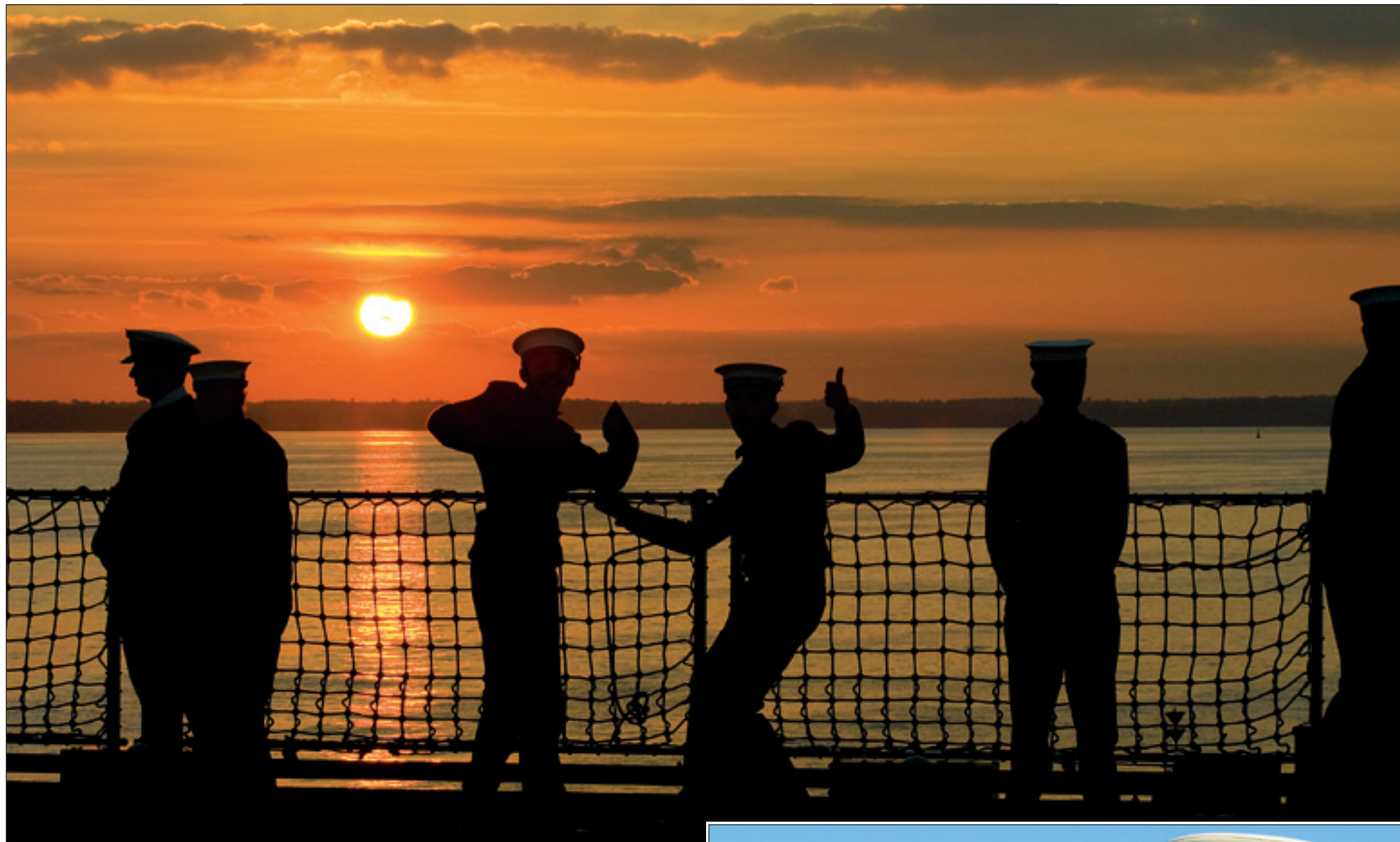
CADETS from Glasgow, Clydebank, Oban, Loch Aber, Helensburgh, Campbeltown, Airdrie and Coatbridge, and East Kilbride units took a flotilla of boats through the Caledonian Canal.

Starting at Laggan Locks, the Clyde (North) Sea Cadet Corps Flotilla went through Loch Oich and on to Loch Ness, where they spent a day training before returning to their starting point, passing

through 18 locks with a total drop of 70ft.

Despite one day of poor conditions, when an anchor was lost then retrieved, the flotilla made the journey safely, stopping at Invergarry castle, Castle Urquhart and the Well of the Seven Heads en route.

The event was organised by District Officer Lt Cdr 'Abe' Lincoln and his crew – who are now under pressure to repeat the visit next year.



TS Largs Bay?

CADETS from across the UK have commemorated the anniversary of Trafalgar and the death of Nelson – and made use of a new training ship to hone their skills.

For RFA Largs Bay read TS Largs Bay, as the new Landing Ship Dock (Auxiliary) transported around 350 cadets from Portsmouth to Greenwich in time for the big day in central London – believed to be the greatest number of cadets taken to sea at one time in the Corps' history.

The passage gave the excited cadets plenty of time to rehearse for the big day – and the oceans of space on the 16,000-tonne landing vessel also made it easy for bands, performers and drill

teams to hone their skills.

The Trafalgar Day Parade was inspected for the first time by Vice Admiral Paul Boissier, Deputy Commander-in-Chief Fleet and Chief of Staff Headquarters who was joined by Capt Jonathan Fry, the new Captain Sea Cadet Corps, who also took part in the Parade for the first time on his first day in the job.

More than 500 cadets from across the country took part in the day's activities, which began with a display of traditional hornpipe dancing and club-swinging in Trafalgar Square, and the Tameside unit's spectacular ladder display.

Then platoons of Sea and Marine Cadets marched from the

Mall to the Square, led by the 80-strong national massed band of the Corps.

After the inspection a wreath-laying ceremony at Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square was led by the Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Caroline Keen.

POC Adam Montgomery, of Sheppey, read Nelson's Prayer.

Mike Cornish, chief executive of the Marine Society and Sea cadets, said: "We are immensely

● *Cadets enjoy the view as Largs Bay leaves Portsmouth (above) while the cadets took every opportunity to rehearse for the Trafalgar Day Parade (right). The parade on the Mall put the Corps in the limelight (below)*

Pictures: LA(Phot) Alex Cave

grateful for all the support we receive from the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary."

As for Largs Bay, she had the honour of being the first of the four Bay-class ships to visit London.

Having left Portsmouth on the Thursday evening, the big auxiliary reached the mouth of the Thames the following day.

A six-hour pilotage upriver to Greenwich followed, giving those on board a spectacular view of the capital at night.

Early on Sunday morning the cadets made their way to Trafalgar Square, and later that day the ship headed downstream, edged through the Thames Barrier and continued to Devonport.





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Childcare voucher scheme launched

ALL members of the UK Armed Forces will have access to a new childcare voucher scheme from this month.

The scheme, which starts on December 10 and is run by Sodexo Pass Ltd, can offer savings in the cost of childcare.

The scheme will give Service personnel the option of reducing the cash element of their salary in favour of childcare vouchers that can help towards the costs of registered childcare.

Suitability for the scheme will depend on personal circumstances.

The childcare vouchers can be used to pay or part-pay for registered child care in the UK and, overseas, in Service locations.

The vouchers are for a child or children for whom the Service person has parental and financial responsibility, and are not transferable.

The vouchers can be used until September 1 following the child's 15th birthday.

Scheme members can choose to receive between £30 and £243 per month in childcare vouchers instead of cash salary from the MOD.

Savings in tax and National Insurance contributions are made because they are only paid on the reduced cash salary.

Total savings will depend on the individual and family circumstances but can be as much as £1,000 to £1,200 per year.

The service will include a help desk to provide advice and guidance, including online information.

In addition, international freephone contact numbers are being set up and will be publicised through the normal MOD communication channels, including the MOD website, HIVE, Families Federations and the chains of command.

Until the scheme goes live on 10th December, you can pre-register your interest in using the scheme by providing contact details to Sodexo Pass by email on AFCVS@sodexopass.co.uk

An application pack will be sent to you when they are available. From December 10, when the scheme is in operation, you will be able to contact the Sodexo Pass Armed Forces Childcare Voucher Scheme help desk using the same email address, via the website www.sodexo.co.uk or by writing to Armed Forces Childcare Voucher Scheme, Sodexo Pass Ltd, 5 Albany Court, Albany Business Park, Frimley Road, Camberley, GU16 7QR.

There is no time limit on applying to join the scheme.

For those who opt into the scheme, any changes to pay on JPA will be notified direct to the MOD by Sodexo Pass when they get each correctly-completed application.

Spouses or civil partners can only use the scheme if they are a Service person – the scheme works by changing your “pay”, and if the MOD don't pay someone, they can't be in the MOD scheme.

Any Service person with an eligible child can join the scheme.



Trainees help shape Navy of the future

Offer is just the ticket

ANDREW Lloyd Webber and The Really Useful Group have offered a special deal for UK Servicemen and women and their families to attend their major productions in London at a greatly reduced rate.

This offer is in recognition of the sterling service the Armed Forces are providing on operations worldwide, and is especially aimed at those returning from deployments and operations.

From January 1 2008, production of a Service ID card will entitle the bearer and their family to 50 per cent off *The Sound of Music* and 25 per cent off *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

These offers are available Monday to Thursday any week.

PERSONNEL attending the Senior and Leading Rates Command Courses (SRCCs and LRCCs) at MWS at HMS Collingwood now have an important role to play in helping to shape the Navy of the future.

Since October 2007, in place of traditional end-of-course presentations, classes have been putting into practice their intellectual leadership skills by analysing future manning challenges and presenting their findings to Fleet HQ's Project Fisher team.

Project Fisher is an on-going project into flexible manning, looking at who the Navy employs, how, where, and for how long.

As Cdre Ian Corder, the man heading up initiative, said: "Whilst the current manpower system is not broken, it is certainly stretched in areas and there are a number of pinch points that require improvements now."

"In the future, however, it is flexibility that will be key."

"With more capable and versatile ships we need to be able to switch them from one tasking to another very quickly to get the best out of them."

"Programmes are likely to become more volatile, so we must ensure that our people can respond with similar flexibility whilst still preserving harmony and individual stability."

"We are looking at a whole variety of options, ranging from extending squadding and/or

additional watches through to much more modular options."

On the subject of MWS command course involvement, Cdre Corder added: "This is a complex problem and we are looking for ideas and views from across the Navy."

"The contribution of the command courses has been excellent so far, and has harnessed the considerable practical experience of those attending."

"The students that have looked at the issues already have thrown up a number of really good, sensible suggestions which are being taken into our work, and I look forward to lots more."

Project Fisher is a natural progression from Topmast and Branch Development, and is the next natural phase of the Navy's people programme.

The project team is clear that in looking ahead over the next ten years to the introduction of Type 45, Astute, CVF and, slightly further afield, the Future Surface Combatant that, unless the manning issues associated with these highly capable, but in rank and rate terms 'top heavy', ships are considered carefully now, the Navy could have significant problems in the future.

The project also recognises the value of Naval personnel as highly-motivated, highly-trained and highly-skilled people who must be employed to the best of their ability and potential, both for their own career satisfaction and for the benefit of the Navy.

Cdre Steve Kirby, the

Commodore of MWS, is delighted by the close link that has formed between the Project Fisher team and a wide range of people across the MWS, including the command course presentation programme.

He told *Navy News*: "We are guilty of dripping about manpower, but usually content to leave sorting it out to someone else, so we have missed a rich source of ideas which the Fisher team are working hard to capture."

"The command courses, which bring together personnel from across the Navy, have been particularly involved and have discovered, to their own surprise, just how complicated manpower structures are and how much thought is required to develop an idea into a workable solution."

"That said, our future Leading and Senior Rates have responded to the challenge with innovative ideas, and can rightly be proud of their role in this key programme."

Speaking during one of the SRCC presentations, PO ET(WE) Simon 'Haggis' Hague noted: "Manning and manpower is something that concerns everyone ... the heart of the issue is the way in which we man our ships, platforms and establishments."

"Project Fisher is looking to the whole Navy for views, and now is our opportunity."

Issues which courses have been invited to wrestle with so far have included:

How can personnel be advanced to Leading Rate more quickly to ensure Branch sustainability?

How can training to AB1 be made more effective?

How can more flexible, and

possibly longer ship deployments be best supported?

How can personnel landed ashore, be it for squadding or other (eg medical) reasons, be best employed?

The solutions delivered by courses have required extensive research and careful thought.

Should readers wish to forward their views/comments to the Project Fisher team they can do so via the project website on the RN web.



● As the only British vessel alongside in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, it was fitting that HMS Monmouth played host to a signing ceremony between the USA and the UK which authorised the role for a British liaison officer in the US Pacific Command (PACOM) HQ. The signatories were Maj Gen Peter Gilchrist, the UK Defence Attaché to the US, and Maj Gen Thomas L Conant, US PACOM Director for Strategic Planning and Policy. On completion, in usual Monmouth style, Commanding Officer Cdr Tim Peacock hosted a lunch for the signatories and other guests

Picture: LA(Phot) Brian Douglas

Maritime aviation in focus

THE Fleet Air Arm Museum in Somerset is to host a maritime air warfare conference at the end of January.

As home to Europe's largest collection of Naval aircraft, the museum – on the Yeovilton naval air station base – provides an ideal backdrop to the event.

Rear Admiral Terry Loughran is to chair the conference, which will include a gala dinner staged beneath the fuselage of Concorde 002, one of the exhibits in the museum.

The conference, which is supported by the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force and the Joint Helicopter Command, takes place on January 31 and February 1.

For more details, contact Javi at DefencelQ on 0207 368 9300 or email Javi.rua@iqpc.co.uk, or see the website www.defenceiq.com/uk/maw

Keynote speakers pencilled in for the conference include Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Adrian Johns, who is also Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm, Commodore Mark Sloan, Director Maritime, Development, Doctrine and Concepts Centre, and Commodore Jerry Stanford, Assistant Chief of Staff (Carrier Strike and Aviation) at Fleet HQ.



● Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Adrian Johns (right) joins campaign co-ordinator WO1 Don Shaw at the launch of the Christmas 'Travel Safe' initiative

Campaign aimed at tired drivers

THE NAVY has launched its 'Safe Journey' campaign to highlight the dangers of driving while tired.

Government research indicates that 18-30-year-old males are more likely to fall asleep at the wheel, and are at a higher risk because they use the roads more at night.

They are also more likely to press on with a journey when tired.

The Department for Transport report states that some 300 people a year are killed in accidents where a driver has fallen asleep at the wheel.

The research also concludes: "Driving between midnight and 6am presents a particular risk as this is when your body clock is in a natural trough. There is another trough between about 2pm and 4pm;

All sleepy drivers are aware of their tiredness, particularly when they start to 'fight sleep', such as opening the window to stay awake;

Opening the window for cold air or turning up the radio are of very limited benefit;

Reaction time devices are of little practical use in detecting driver tiredness.

Tips for drivers include:

Plan your journey to include a 15-minute break every two hours of driving;

Drinking two cups of coffee or other high caffeine drinks and resting to allow the caffeine to kick in are methods of combating tiredness;

Have a good night's sleep before setting out;

If you start to feel sleepy find a safe place to stop – not the hard shoulder of the motorway;

Remember the risks if you have to get up very early to start a trip, or have a long drive home.

Share the driving if possible.

Line managers can play a major role by knowing their people and managing them in a way that will help them achieve a safe journey – for example, taking into account where they live, or spotting if they are driving home and looking jaded.

The campaign also reiterates the dangers of drinking and driving.

Simple tips to keep your baby safe

A POTENTIALLY life-saving awareness campaign has been launched in the Portsmouth area aimed at the staff and their families of major employers – and the Royal Navy is amongst those to benefit.

'Safer Portsmouth Babies' is reminding parents that while they may be relaxing over the Christmas holiday, their babies are still relying on them to keep them safe.

Simple tips which campaigners are hoping to pass on to all mums and dads with babies include:

Don't sleep with your baby. The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a cot in the room with you;

Beware when drinking alcohol or using drugs as you will still need to be able to respond to your babies needs;

Alcohol or drug use can make you do things you would not normally do, such as falling asleep with your baby in bed or on a sofa which can lead to overheating or suffocation and Sudden Infant Death;

The safest way for your baby to sleep is on their back, not front or side;

The recommended room temperature for your baby is 16 to 20°C;

Duvets and pillows are not recommended for babies under a year. Use a cotton sheet and light layers of cotton blankets;

Parents should avoid over heating their babies by overdressing them, particularly when moving from outdoors to a heated area, eg shopping centre, family home;

Don't let anyone smoke in the same room as your baby. Smoking significantly increases the risk of Sudden Infant death.

Sleeping with a baby on a sofa or armchair is particularly dangerous

The year-long Safer Portsmouth Babies campaign is run by Portsmouth's Local Safeguarding Children Board, supported by Hampshire Constabulary, Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust, Portsmouth City teaching Primary Care Trust and Surestart.



● Parcels are delivered to HMS Argyll in the Gulf

New deal extends free parcels scheme

SANTA Claus is not in on this parcel delivery scheme, but would probably be impressed by the opportunity to get gifts, messages and home comforts to loved ones and friends who are on duty overseas at Christmas.

And a new deal will also extend the free parcel scheme indefinitely for forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The annual MOD-funded Christmas freepost scheme for operational theatres was due to end on December 7 – the last date for posting to guarantee delivery by Christmas.

The scheme has proved very popular, with around 100,000 parcels a week sent free of postage to around 14,000 frontline personnel in the past few weeks, providing them with gifts, non-perishable food items and home comforts.

For a list of BFPO numbers covered by this scheme, see the BFPO website at www.bfpo.mod.uk/freepacketservice.htm

Now Royal Mail and the MOD are to continue the freepost service to addresses in the Iraq and Afghanistan theatres indefinitely as a permanent part

of the Deployed Welfare Package.

The two organisations are sharing the cost, and it is expected run for as long as British forces are deployed there.

The service is available to all personnel serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and in a number of Royal Navy ships serving in support of these theatres.

Relatives and friends in the UK may send items only to named Service personnel or entitled MOD-deployed civilians at specified BFPO numbers.

As *Navy News* went to press, the eligible BFPO locations included HMS Argyll, HMS Blyth, HMS Campbeltown, HMS Enterprise, HMS Ramsey, RFA Bayleaf and RFA Sir Bedivere – but the situation changes as ships arrive and leave theatre.

For the latest eligible BFPO addresses, and for rules and regulations concerning the extended delivery service, see the BFPO website at www.bfpo.mod.uk/continuation_of_free_packet_service.htm

All items must be posted via Post Office counters, and should not be posted in pillar boxes.



Information system helps save energy

TEN MOD sites across South-West England are set to improve their energy efficiency by up to ten per cent.

And if they meet their targets, it could save up to £750,000 a year, and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 2,400 tonnes a year.

Key to the savings is a new energy information network in the Plymouth area managed by Debut Services Ltd.

Some 500 pulse meters have been installed in buildings and facilities at sites occupied by the RN and Royal Marines, including the most energy-hungry locations, such as messes, workshops and accommodation blocks.

The meters feed readings every half hour into the information system, allowing managers to monitor usage and identify opportunities to save energy.

A central 'energy bureau' will set targets and collect data from all ten sites, allowing best practice to be promoted and poor performances to be studied in detail.

Lessons learned will be put to use in future MOD energy-saving projects as the departments seeks to cut estate carbon dioxide emissions by 15 per cent in the next four years.

RNPT tour dates

DATES and details of the RN Presentation Team's events for the coming month are:

Tues Dec 4: Nottingham Gateway Hotel, Nuthall Rd, Nottingham;

Weds Dec 5: Chesterfield Hotel, Malkin St, Chesterfield.

Anyone wanting to book a place at a presentation should contact the RNPT on 020 8833 8020 or email rnpt@gtnet.gov.uk

It's your 2-6

NEED to get your message across to the rest of the RN?

To feature in 2-6 contact Lt Cdr Gregor Birse (Fleet Media Ops), 93832 8809 or Lt Cdr Harvey Burwin (DPR(N)), 9621 85984.

Top-class learning in Bristol

A NEW upgraded classroom has been opened on board HMS Bristol at Whale Island.

Although the former destroyer is part of the HMS Excellent base, it is an important element of the curriculum of the Maritime Warfare School.

All Engineering Technicians (ETs) joining the MWS undergo training in Bristol, living on board for three days and two nights.

This time helps them acclimatise to the rigours of living in a mess deck.

In addition to tracing systems and ship familiarisation exercises, the trainees have to complete an NVQ in 'Performing Engineering Operations', the first step in their Level 2 Modern Apprenticeship and to the Foundation Degree offered as they develop through their Naval Career.

It is essential, therefore, that the facilities around them – including intranet and internet access – allow for their development.

Silent Service offers golden opportunity

A CAREER in the Submarine Service is looking particularly attractive at the moment – especially for a select group.

The Service offers opportunities for a career with a difference.

Professionalism is the hallmark of this branch, with qualified submariners earning the right to wear their dolphins – the coveted badge of the Silent Service.

Submariners also benefit from a substantial financial reward package, with additional Specialist Pay (Submarine) and a cash bonus known as a 'golden hello'.

The current standard Submarine Golden Hello (SGH)

for those making the grade is a cash bonus of £5,000.

Full details can be found in RNTM 205/07.

For a limited period an enhanced reward package is available for a small number of transfers from General Service to shortage categories.

Those meeting the eligibility criteria of this package will receive an Enhanced SGH of £7,500, payable upon qualifying as a submariner.

The ESGH is open to shortage categories, at the AB level, in the submarine Warfare Specialisations of Sonar (SSM), Tactical Systems (TSM) and Communication Information Systems (CISSM), and also ET(WESM), Logs Pers(SM)

and Logs CS(D)(SM) branches.

Additionally, volunteers are sought at LH level in the Logs CS(D)(SM) branch.

The ESGH is open until September 30 2008 or until the target group quotas are met, whichever is soonest.

To take advantage of this opportunity, you must act now – see RNTM 179/07 for full details.

A brief description of employment within the shortage categories will be available through the Personnel Support Team Autumn term brief.

Commitment Bonuses (CBs) are paid in return for a commitment to serve for a further specified period.

CBs are used by the Services as a

flexible measure to assist in meeting their manning requirements.

Currently CBs of £2,750 are paid after five and eight years of reckonable service each attracting a further one year return of service (RoS).

RNTM 194/07 announced changes to this arrangement for Able Rates in the submarine Warfare Specialisations (SSM, TSM and CISSM), Engineering Technicians (ETWESM and ETMESM).

For these ratings, the current CBs are to be combined to pay £5,500 at the five-year point with a two-year RoS.

For more information on any of the financial packages outlined above, or to gain an insight into the role of the modern submarine, contact WO1 (CISSM) C S Mould GCGI, Requirements Manager Warfare Ratings (Submarines) on 93832 5936 or email colin.mould217@mod.uk



● ET Kevin Turnbull of HMS Lancaster drops in on the Naval Families Federation team

Sound reasons for calling on 'the Voice'

THE Naval Families Federation (NFF) is the independent voice of RN and RM families.

Its role is to highlight families' issues or concerns to the chain of command and service providers, and to work with them and other agencies to develop the support they provide to families.

The NFF aspiration is to improve the quality of life for Naval Service families on any aspect that is affected by the Service lifestyle.

This representation keeps the RN in line with the other Services, ensuring that Naval families' differences are acknowledged and understood for tri-Service issues, and also reminds the Army that although they are the biggest Service, they do not necessarily

have the loudest voice...

Have you ever had:

❑ Unresolved problems with Service Families Accommodation?

❑ Trouble finding a dentist after moving?

❑ Difficulty securing a school place for your child?

❑ A sense of frustration because you can't get a foot on the housing ladder?

❑ Absolutely no idea who to contact in an emergency?

The multi-tasking role of the NFF's small team is to ensure that all the above, and many more areas of concern that you have spoken about over the past four years, are drawn attention to, acknowledged and understood at the highest level in the Naval Service.

The NFF attends meetings with organisations who have an influence on the lives of RN families, such as Defence Estates, Modern Housing Solutions, Children's Education Advisory Service, SSAFA-FH, and the Annington Trust.

They have also had a couple of meetings with the Shadow Defence team, who are keen to know about Service family life.

You may also be interested to know that the NFF has direct access to Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Adrian Johns, and meets the Under Secretary of State for Defence on a bi-annual basis.

Find out more about the NFF at its website www.nff.org.uk, and in the magazine *Homeport*.

And while on that subject, the

NFF has a challenge for you.

They are always after an eye-catching cover, and while some ships have risen to the challenge, any proposals for the summer edition will be considered.

Visitors are always welcome at the NFF, especially from front-line units – it gives the Federation the opportunity to tell you at first hand what resources are available to your unit and colleagues.

So remember, if you get to a point when you feel you have exhausted all other possibilities and really don't know where else to go, give the Federation a try.

Contact them at Castaway House, 311 Twyford Avenue, Portsmouth PO2 8RN, tel 023 9265 4374, email admin@nff.org.uk

● Photos of the presentation of the first Naval honours of World War 2

Trophy marks bravery

ON NOVEMBER 23 1939 a German Type A magnetic mine was located in the shallow waters off Shoeburyness in Essex.

A team of four – Lt Cdr John Ouvry, Lt Cdr Roger Lewis, CPO Charles Baldwin and AB Archibald Vearncombe – made the mine safe, and it was subsequently moved to HMS Vernon for examination.

On December 19 that year, King George VI visited HMS Vernon to present medals to the four men – the first Naval honours of the war.

The RN Trophy Store's item number 27251 marks the occasion

– the display shows all four men receiving their awards (DSCs for the officers, DSMs for the ratings), plus Lt John Glenn (DSC), who dealt with a second Type A mine with Baldwin and Vearncombe at the same place a few days later.

The trophy is signed by all five men and the King.





● 2nd Coxn PO Hedley Woodley at his diving station on the forward hydroplanes of HMS Tribune in 1942. This image was one of a series of publicity stills by official photographer Jack Bryson for the propaganda film *Close Quarters*

Picture: The War at Sea in Photographs/Imperial War Museum T501

Every shade of grey

IF EVER an old features editor needed to be persuaded to publish an article, a simple phrase would sway him: ‘never-before-seen pictures’.

It is a slogan to beware: never-before-seen pictures actually have a habit of having been seen before...

So it was with some scepticism that I turned the pages of Conway's *The War at Sea in Photographs 1939-1945* (Conway, £25 ISBN 978-1844-860456) for it promised “wartime imagery shown for the first time”, writes Richard Hargreaves.

And it does. Here is a book which lives up to the blurb – and some.

Photo-histories have a habit of being a bit disappointing: the same old images poorly reproduced and poorly captioned.

The authors, Stuart Robertson and Stephen Dent, have raided public and private archives the world over.

The result is a superlative collection of images superbly reproduced which focuses on the deeds not just of the Royal and US Navies, but also the Imperial Japanese Navy, the *Kriegsmarine*, the *Regia Marina*, the Dutch, the Canadians, the Germans.

Some of the images you will have seen before: the Graf Spee scuttled, sailors abandoning ship on the Prince of Wales, Ark Royal's death throes, Battleship Row in Pearl Harbor ablaze.

But many you will not have cast eyes on before – chiefly images drawn from individuals or foreign archives.

German preparations for the invasion of Britain, *Seelöwe* (Sealion), through the lens of 19-year-old Volkmar König's Leica, look exactly what they were – amateurish – compared with the photographs of the D-Day landings later in the book.

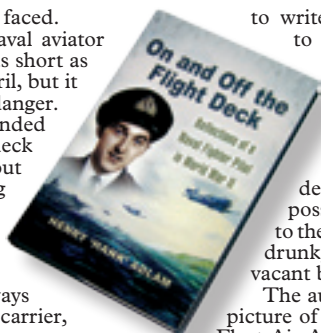
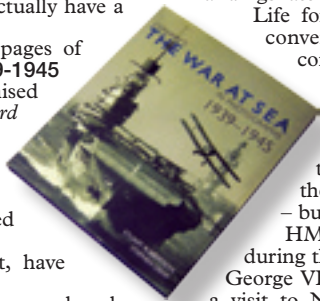
Life for the men of HMS Sandown, an Isle of Wight ferry converted into a minesweeper, looks rather idyllic by comparison. The men played cards, sunbathed, wrote letters home, posed with the dogs which were the ship's mascot (they did, of course, sweep for mines as well).

Importantly, the authors have chosen to litter their book not just with images of war – the guns booming, the flight deck crew taking cover as kamikazes pounce, the moment a bomb exploded aboard USS Enterprise – but also life at sea.

HMS Indomitable's sailors mill around on the flight deck during the Malta convoys, Mussolini presents medals to officers, George VI and Queen Elizabeth stroll around HMS Phoebe on a visit to Northern Ireland, burial services for comrades lost in action.

But what really lifts this work out of the ordinary is the colour photography. So vivid are many of the images, such as a series of publicity shots for the film *Close Quarters* taken aboard HMS Tribune, that one might think they were taken last week – not 65 years ago.

Being a pedant (*surely not* – Ed), it would have been nice to see a photograph of Schleswig-Holstein pounding the Westerplatte – the first shots fired in the war at sea. That, however, is a piffing quibble.



Eagles and penguins

IN AERIAL combat, there is the world of ‘Sailor’ Malan, ‘Cat’s Eyes’ Cunningham, Erich Hartmann and Adolf Galland, the aces.

And then there is the world of the backbone of the air forces, the sloggers. The men in the air day in, day out, achieving a handful of kills perhaps.

No public adulation, no glittering medals and newsreel appearances for them, just the constant strain of battle and short-lived friendships.

Henry ‘Hank’ Adlam was one such pilot, typical of the thousands who took to the skies with the Fleet Air Arm between 1939 and 1945.

He served in every theatre – Atlantic, Mediterranean and Far East – as a fighter pilot, service recounted in *On and Off the Flight Deck* (Pen & Sword, £19.99 ISBN 978-1844-156290).

There is not a glut of memoirs from Fleet Air Arm aviators out there, and fewer still from the world of the fighter pilot.

And it is a world worthy of admiration.

Not for those riveting tales of gladiatorial duels but because of

the perils the men faced.

The life of a naval aviator in WW2 was not as short as during Bloody April, but it was fraught with danger.

‘Hank’ Adlam landed 102 times on the deck of a carrier without a scratch, earning membership of a fairly exclusive body: the Perch Club.

He didn’t always land on a carrier, however.

On patrol protecting a convoy in a Wildcat, his fuel ran out, forcing him to ditch – an unhappy prospect given his fear of the sea.

The aircraft “ploughed into the brick wall of the sea. The engine and nose went under immediately and the icy sea was gushing into my cockpit.”

Adlam managed to get the dinghy out, scrambled into it and watched as his aircraft plunged into the Atlantic.

He was rescued, but many comrades were not so fortunate. His close friend was gunned down by a Focke Wulf Condor – a Luftwaffe reconnaissance aircraft which served as the eyes of the U-boats.

“I sat down at the small desk

to write a personal letter to his parents, telling them of our long friendship and how much it had meant to me,” Adlam recalls.

After packing his dead friend’s personal possessions, he headed to the wardrobe bar, got drunk, fell into the now vacant bunk and cried.

The author paints a vivid picture of life in the wartime Fleet Air Arm, aerial combat, and also the strain of operations on the men.

The British carriers “were unsuitable for the extreme hot weather of the Far East”. There was inadequate water, no air conditioning.

“Every man in each carrier was living life at such intensity, with long hours of work, that there was really no time to think too much about the discomfort,” the author writes.

On operations, the pilots worked two days on, two days off, with flights from dawn till dusk, sat in a cramped cockpit on top of an uncomfortable parachute.

By the time the British carriers grappled with the Japanese in the final year of the war, they had the

measure of their Japanese foe. The Hellcat Adlam and his comrades flew was superior to enemy fighters and the Royal Navy aviators were better trained than their opponent by this stage of the war.

But that did not mean the skies were devoid of danger. During 32 days of combat in support of the Iwo Jima operations in 1945, Hank Adlam lost ten comrades. They had, in return, accounted for at least 39 enemy aircraft.

Adlam remained in the Fleet Air Arm briefly after hostilities. He thought he and his fellow aviators could shape a future fleet with naval air power at its core.

He and his generation would rise to become captains, even admirals perhaps, and the mistakes of WW2 would not be repeated.

He was to be sorely disappointed; frustrated by a force of ‘eagles led by penguins’, he eventually declined a full commission and opted for civvy street where life was no easier. This Harrow-educated man found himself employed as a toilet cleaner, factory worker and door-to-door salesman as he struggled to adjust to post-war Britain.

That possibly is a story for a sequel, for the author proclaims his aerial escapades to be the first volume of his memoirs.

In the firing line

WHEN I was sent a copy of Noel Mostert's impressive-looking *The Line Upon A Wind*, I thought: What have we here?

Was it a useful new history of the wars of 1793 to 1815 taking into account all the important new scholarship that has resulted from the ‘Trafalgar Decade’?

Or was it, perhaps, yet another overly-long book by an amateur historian tempted to try his hand at the rehearsing of well-known facts and traditional misinterpretations? writes Prof Eric Grove of the University of Salford.

The first red light was the bibliography. With a very few exceptions, it could have been compiled a quarter of a century or more ago. There is no mention of Roger Knight's monumental Nelson biography, nor too of Nicholas Rodger's *Command of the Ocean*.

There clearly had to be something other the book had to offer especially as, according to the ‘blurb’, the author's previous book *Frontiers* (about South Africa) had received much praise.

Depressingly, I soon found out that my worst fears had been fulfilled. There was indeed little or nothing that was new or historically worth while about this book.

However, I still thought I might be being unfair. Could so many reviewers be wrong? This raised the further question: had *Frontiers* really been so well received?

So I obtained a scholarly, well-informed review of *Frontiers* by Tim Stapleton of Dalhousie University in Canada.

Stapleton's criticisms of the old book exactly paralleled mine of the new. *Frontiers* was much too long; so is *Line Upon a Wind* – 773 pages and no less than 72 chapters.

The earlier book was “encumbered by superfluous detail”. So is the new one, for example a whole chapter is devoted to the inconsequential if tragic Camelford-Peterson fracas in Antigua in January 1798.

Mostert's previous work, Dr Stapleton said was “handsomely produced, masterfully written and beautifully illustrated but it seems to represent a throwback to an earlier form of liberal historiography.”

This is all too true of *The Line Upon a Wind* also. The book is a self-indulgent, unfocussed chronicle that wanders off down multiple byways, even covering the bombardment of Algiers a year after the Napoleonic Wars' end, an event more the beginning of the new naval era of *Pax Britannica* and littoral operations rather than the culmination of the old.

Perhaps to boost sales in the USA the author is much concerned with American naval actions which have little or no direct connection with the primary subject. These sections are long enough to form a short book in themselves.

There is much traditional and obsolete negativity about the Royal Navy in this period. The author cannot see that seniority was not just some pathological social convention but something with vital financial implications in an age of prize money, an issue he surprisingly more or less ignores.

Despite Rodger's *Wooden World* being one of the few (relatively) modern items in the bibliography we get all the usual distorted facets of the ‘black legend’ of the Georgian navy with its twin dimensions on brutal discipline (described in almost sadistic detail) and poor food.

How did the finest and most powerful navy in the world expect its ships to be powered except by ‘square meals’ that were often better than those eaten by ordinary citizens ashore?

Mostert is also deeply unsound on recruitment and confused about the press gang. For much better assessments of the social side of the naval history of this

The Grove Review

period read Blake's *Sailing to Glory* or Clayton's excellent books, *Trafalgar* and *Tars*.

I was therefore unsurprised to read in Dr Stapleton's review that *Frontiers* had added little that was new to the study of South African history and that it had sustained “many misconceptions and myths”.

One can only express sympathy for an author who thinks that Mahan's tendentious work of over a century ago is still “the finest of all the biographies” of Nelson. Or that Edward Fraser's almost equally old works remain the last word, unleavened by more recent material.

Mostert has real problems explaining Trafalgar's significance. He cannot face the strategic truth that it was a clash of Mediterranean fleets about control of that sea.

It helps that he completely ignores the passing into the Mediterranean of the army that would land in Italy and win the victory of Maida.

Instead we are left with a confusing analysis where at one point Napoleon recognises that there can be no future invasion attempt but at another (on the same page!) that the Emperor never gives up the idea of invasion and continues to build a powerful fleet to cover it.

Also, the author does not seem to realise that the Spanish commanders were probably under orders not to assist an attempt to invade Britain – but then he would have had to read a recent book for that insight.

Mostert might well be right to say that the victory of Trafalgar symbolised release from the invasion threat but it was Cornwallis, Calder and the Austrians that had actually done the business of countering it. The author also completely misses Duckworth's victory at San Domingo in 1806 that demonstrates both the continued post-Trafalgar threat of French squadrons and the first use of Nelson as a source of inspiration.

The Tangier-based author has been lucky enough to do much of his research at the beautiful Garrison Library at Gibraltar, looked after with such dedication by Lorna Swift who kindly and proudly showed me round at the end of October this year.

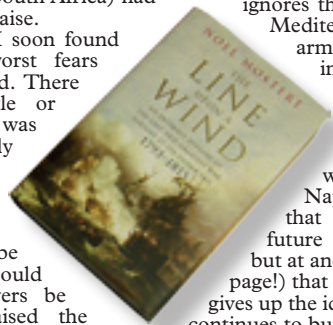
Its fascinating collection is indeed a wonderful quarry of source material, especially the useful *Naval Chronicle* published from 1799 to 1814.

Yet even such contemporary sources must be used with critical and well-informed insight. Mostert's quotations are often overly long and the evidence is sometimes used rather simplistically.

A notable case of this is when a middle class complaint about upper class boys being brutalised by midshipman with lower deck backgrounds is accepted at face value and not as the call for the social exclusion of men of lower deck origin from the officer corps that it clearly was. Such total exclusion sadly became the norm for the rest of the 19th Century.

I cannot in all conscience recommend *The Line Upon A Wind* (Jonathan Cape, £25 ISBN 978-0-224-06922-9). The money would be much better spent on works by Rodger or Clayton, Knight, Pocock or Woodman.

To end on a positive note, however, there is one saving grace with the book. Mostert's traditional preoccupation with heroes does lead him to emphasise the role of Sydney Smith in stopping Napoleon in his tracks at Acre in 1799, something that is too often forgotten and, which if it had gone the other way, might have had greater strategic consequences than Trafalgar.



● 'A mighty display'... A contemporary postcard celebrates the review of the Home Fleet in the Solent in 1907



Hype and hyper-tension

THOSE who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

So warned Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana.

It is something the British media might take note of.

Each major sporting event, they whip up nationalism and public fervour.

And each major sporting event, invariably the sportsmen and women fail to deliver and the British public feel disheartened.

A century ago it was not sporting stars which Fleet Street rallied behind, but the 'castles of steel' of the Royal Navy.

Nothing made an Englishman's heart swell with pride more than knowledge that his country possessed the finest navy on the Seven Seas.

But as Jan Ruger shows in his outstanding **Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire** (Cambridge University Press, £50 ISBN 978-0-521-87576-9), such fervour and enthusiasm – or, seen from the distance of 100 years, hubris – had inevitable and fateful consequences.

Between 1897 and 1914 the peoples of Britain and Germany were stirred up by the media like never before as the two nations built ever more powerful battleships and a cold war raged between them.

Brits have always looked with disdain at Prussian and German militarism, British militarism, or rather British 'navalism', however, was more than acceptable.

In July 1909, the Home Fleet paraded along the Thames from the Pool of London down to the estuary, a chain of iron and steel 40 miles long.

Twenty thousand people rushed the pier at Southend so they could tour HMS Dreadnought. Some fainted, others were bruised and battered. Several people even suffered broken ribs.

Souvenir stalls sold postcards, commemorative programmes, flags. There were Dreadnought biscuits and toys.

The pomp and ceremony of the 'Thames Naval Review' came in a climactic decade at the end of a century of increasing 'naval theatre', as the author calls it.

Ship launches became ever more dramatic: the religious and musical trappings of ceremonies only really arrived in the 1870s, surprisingly. It wasn't just launches which became spectacle. By the turn of the 20th Century, even the laying of the first keel plate became a theatrical affair, captured on camera and recorded in the press.

All this was set against a backdrop of a media explosion. The popular press mushroomed on the cusp of the Dreadnought era. 'Picture palaces' sprang up across the land. Illustrated magazines flew off the shelves. Germans in particular delighted in *Flottenschauspiele* – 'Fleet spectacle' – mock battles fought by model battleships in lakes and ponds.

The Royal Navy especially embraced the rise of the penny press.

It bent over backwards to accommodate journalists and photographers so coverage could be maximised. It even apologised in Parliament when a press boat

at the 1909 Spithead review was late returning to the naval base, depositing its 'cargo' of unfed journalists.

And why did the RN pamper the media? Not least to further its own ends.

Jacky Fisher conceded to the German naval attaché in London that he was quite pleased by the "little naval scare" which had provoked widespread public concern – and prompted the government to order eight new battleships in 1909.

Admirals and naval correspondents on both sides of the North Sea were convinced that all this rhetoric, all this pomp, all this clamour for battleships, made peace, not war, more likely.

The Royal Navy was to be so powerful that no-one would dare challenge it. "The best way to make war impossible is to make victory certain," First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill proclaimed.

Unfortunately, the Kaiser didn't agree. His shipyards tried to keep pace with each new launch. His officers toasted *Der Tag* (The Day) – the day when the High Seas Fleet would wipe the Royal Navy off the Seven Seas.

Only a few dissenters warned where the naval fever and fervour would lead. "And still the megalomaniacs clamour for more," wrote the *Labour Leader* during the Thames review. "The appetite for armaments grows with what it feeds on."

The diplomats tried to close Pandora's Box. They too feared where the tubthumping would lead.



An age of Castles and Battles

TWO bibles which celebrate the deeds of their respective class of ships have come out of the Maritime Books stable.

The Castle-class corvette was immortalised in fiction and on celluloid in *The Cruel Sea* (as the fictitious Saltash Castle).

They are now immortalised in fact, courtesy of Norman Goodwin's monumental **Castle Class Corvettes** (£30 ISBN 978-1-904459-279), a 530-page homage to the 39 ships and the hundreds of men who served in them.

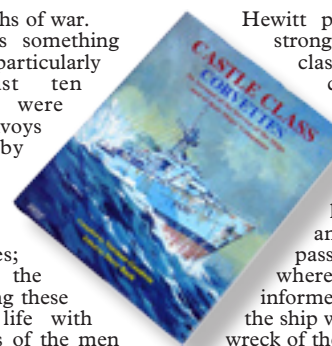
The author, who served in two Castles – Allington and Tintagel – charts the month-by-month (and, at times, day-by-day) career of ships which were the backbone of the escort and anti-U-boat fleet in

the last 18 months of war.

Escorting was something the class was particularly good at; just ten merchantmen were sunk in convoys shepherded by these corvettes.

Goodwin has drawn upon personal and private archives; it is, of course, the latter which bring these fine ships to life with scores of images of the men and numerous accounts of the horrors and trials of the Battle of the Atlantic to darkly comic episodes.

Hunting U-boats off the Irish coast in Launceston Castle, Ray



Hewitt picked up a "very strong echo" and tried to classify the unknown quantity.

"It soon became obvious it was a non-sub – it was much too large." The details and location were passed on to the bridge, whereupon the captain informed the sonar team the ship was passing over the wreck of the *Lusitania*.

■ Designed to cope with the twin threat of *Stuka* and U-boat, the Battle-class destroyer dealt with neither – all arrived too late on the scene to see action in WW2.

... And that's a shame because

The "violent articles" in the German and British press, wrote Sir Edward Goschen, Ambassador to Berlin, were "quite unnecessary. Press violence only embittered relations."

This is an impressively-researched volume offering a real insight into the minds of Britons and Germans, their leaders, their newspapers and their navies a century ago.

It ended, inevitably, in the two countries locking horns. But there was no *Der Tag*, no second Trafalgar.

"People are disappointed that we have not had a Trafalgar or Tsushima," the great Fred Jane wrote just a fortnight into the war.

"Events of that sort make very fine reading and also fine pieces for picture palaces, but they are not modern warfare."

And so the Great War at sea became the great bore at sea.

The dreadnoughts came to grips only once – at Jutland, which proved to be an immense disappointment.

Britons were weaned on the spirit of Nelson.

They expected a victory, but it had to be a victory as great and as glorious as any in history.

The surrender of the High Seas Fleet in November 1918 is as complete a victory as the Royal Navy has ever attained. But it was not glorious.

"Because of this lack of display, one feels that the unthinking do not fully realise what the nation – indeed what the whole world – owes to the British Navy," First Sea Lord 'Rosie' Wemyss astutely observed.

With the hindsight of history, one cannot help thinking that the seeds of today's disinterest in affairs naval were thus sown.

The Battles (named for great clashes in British military history) were the apogee of wartime design.

Instead, the 'beautiful Battles' looked for a role in a post-war world. Some were converted in radar pickets – a role now performed by Type 42 destroyers (although the Battles had no missiles to shoot down incoming aircraft) – others became trials ships and others still slotted into the early Cold War fleet, particularly in the Mediterranean.

The lives of all 26 Battles (two served in the RAN) are charted extensively by Patrick Boniface in **Battle Class Destroyers** (£20 ISBN 978-1-904459-286), an apt (and very similar) companion to the Castle-class book.

The appliance(s) of science

THE Royal Navy of the past and future meet in Patrick G. Cox's science fiction novel **Out of Time** (Authorhouse, £8.99 ISBN 1-4259-5995-4 (sc)) – and the author's dark blue take on starship fleets of the 23rd Century works well.

Three young sailors on the 74-gun warship HMS Spartan find themselves dragged from the Napoleonic era to the 23rd-Century spaceship NECS Vanguard through a freak accident.

But adapting to this 400-year dislocation is made easier by the enduring RN ethos and *esprit de corps* – and as the trio learn to cope with the future, the officers and men of the Vanguard begin to learn from the past.

Human nature also endures, and the political power struggle of the future is not beyond the comprehension of those who had been fighting to blunt Buonaparte's ambitions when they were so rudely interrupted.

And fighting men in Nelson's navy were used to the threat of

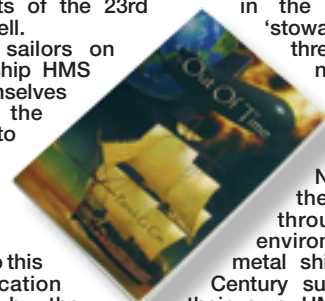
battle – whether the blood and smoke of the wooden walls or a hi-tech clash in 2204, a scrap is still a scrap.

The captain of the Vanguard also has a particular interest in the welfare of his 'stowaways' in another thread tying old and new together.

There is more than a hint of the 21st-Century Navy present as the crew voyage through a hostile environment in their metal ship, just as 21st-Century submariners do in their own HMS Vanguard, to which the starship bears a more than passing resemblance.

Although the book would have benefited from tighter editing, it is an engaging story, and one where the science does not get in the way of the fiction.

The author has also left the door open for more adventures, so perhaps we have not seen the last of the time travelling tars Harry Heron, Ferghal O'Connor and Danny Gunn.



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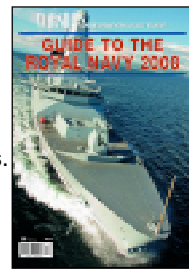
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No longer novices

MONTHS of preparation paid off for some of the RN's rookie fighters with five out of six victories in the CS novice boxing championships.

Team captain Mne Paul 'Fergie' Ferguson (RM Poole) led from the front to defeat SAC Todd (RAF) in the Class B 69kg category.

With a series of well-timed and accurate shots, he racked up the points to earn a decisive 18-2 victory.

Mne Liam 'Naz' Nazairpour (UKLF CSG) was next up and faced a tough challenge against a well-schooled Army opponent, Pte Shearer.

'Naz' pulled out all the stops with his finest fight to date. His unorthodox style and speed posed immense problems for the soldier, who never settled. It was a successful tactic as the Royal earned a comfortable points victory.

Other RN champions on the night were AB Jenkins (75kg), NA(SE) Dave Harrison (60kg) and Mne Joe Harvey (91kg). The sole disappointment was the narrow defeat of Cpl Paul Ballinger (RM Poole) by the Army's L/Cpl Sharman; encouragingly, however, this was Ballinger's best fight of the season.

"This was a brilliant night for RN boxing. There were some outstanding personal performances. It's been a huge boost to the team's morale," said RN coach Sgt Graham Alderson.

Lacrosse purposes

THE new lacrosse season opened with the team facing off against Exeter University in new red, white and blue kit.

The RN team immediately got into the thick of the fight with S/Lts Chris Suckling and Eadin Brown (RAF Cranwell) dominating in the face-off and managing the midfield. There were also commendable performances from CS(P) O'Connor and AB(Logs(Pers)) Mike Marsden (Raleigh), the latter bagging the Navy's sole goal.

Lt James Edmondson (MCC Bahrain) was on the receiving end of some rough tackles in defence – after holding off some marauding attackers he eventually left the field injured.

AETs Karl Burns and Lewis Davies (702 NAS) and Lt Ed Adams (846 NAS) were the 'engine room' of the side, motoring up and down, turning defence into attack.

Particularly encouraging was the fact that six of the nine RN players had never picked up a lacrosse stick before.

The team is looking for fresh blood from both sexes of all ages and abilities. Details from Lt Dan Weil at RN.Lacrosse@NavyStar.com or navy@bathexiles.com.



● Capt Richard Moore RM beats PO(UW) Mickey Warriner (HMS St Albans) in the Pompey goal only for S/Lt Sean Trevethan (HMS Collingwood) to stop the shot on the line. The Royals went on to win the nailbiter 6-5

Picture: Keith Woodland, HMS Collingwood

Royals grab the spoils

A LAST-ditch winner in a thrilling Inter-Command indoor hockey championships saw the green berets snatch the title out of the hands of Naval Air Command.

A titanic clash between the Royals and Portsmouth was a fitting finale to two days of pulsating hockey at HMS Collingwood, writes Lt Cdr Alan Walker, secretary RNHA.

There was some success on the 'pitch' for Pompey who claimed the ladies' title.

In the men's decider, Portsmouth were 4-2 up at the break. With the scores tied at 5-5 and the clock running out, the green berets hit the back of the net through Surg Lt Dave Potter to not only break Portsmouth hearts but those of NAC too, watching on the sidelines.

It was a thrilling encounter and despite the best efforts of rock-like goalkeeper PO Mickey Warriner in the Portsmouth net, Pompey were unable to keep out the various strikes from the green machine (four from Mne Tom Nicoll and one from Capt Richie Moore before the doctor's killer strike).

Nicoll was the tournament's top scorer with nine goals, one ahead of NAC's Mark Stanton (who only made two appearances).

Sgt Andy Crofts (Fleet HQ), the Royals' captain, so often the unsung hero, had much to do with his side's four wins out of four.

He is a quiet man doing a top job usually in defence, occasionally up front – a bit of a 'ninja' in Royal Marines speak.

Spare a thought for Scotland, who were up there with the big boys for much of the competition.

They had top keeper Lt Jamie Wells (CO of HMS Archer), the evergreen LOM Gav Gettings and the absolutely splendid POMEA Russ Garner in their ranks.

All gave a great account of themselves despite Scotland losing all four encounters.

Russ pipped newly-qualified Coach Dave Beaudro into second place when the teams voted for the player of the tournament.

The Royal Marines and Naval Air Command were due to represent the Senior Service at the six-team Inter-Services Inter-Command Tournament (ISICT) which was taking place as *Navy News* went to press.

In the women's competition, there were splendid efforts by Navy Hockey's 'Fab Four': new team manager WO Cathy Lodge (Foxhill) for Plymouth; the frantically-busy PWO course instructor Lt Cdr Kay Lewis (Portsmouth); Navy vice captain POAEG Georgina Patterson (Air); and RN team captain Lt Sam Imrie (HMS Daring for Scotland).

Their energy ensured all four command teams took part instead of an East vs West encounter.

On the downside, the popularity of the Akrotiri 7s hockey in Cyprus the previous week affected player availability and a number of key players were unavoidably absent.

Several new players emerged for each team – and some will undoubtedly go on to play for the RN one day.

For others, representing the Command at this level may prove to be the pinnacle of their hockey career. Either way there is surely a case for a return to the award of Command Colours – or at the very least an entitlement to wear the

Command motif on sports clothing (AROs please note).

The competition was evenly contested.

Portsmouth with two wins, won the competition with Lt Debra Vout top-scoring with five goals.

It was good to see Scotland in second place with four points where joint top scorers Surg Lt Cdr (D) Gillian Kemp and colleague DSA Claire Smart 'drilled in' five goals each and 'injected' some pace into the matches (*that's quite enough dental puns – Ed*).

Plymouth also had four points but a worse goal difference (despite a very fit looking Vikki Donovan rolling back the years to score all eight of Plymouth's goals).

The closeness of the event was demonstrated when Naval Air, finishing in fourth place, beat the overall winners Portsmouth in the final women's match.

RN Hockey is grateful to the Manager of HMS Heron UPO for the 'clear lower deck' for hockey of UPO personnel.

The Logistics Pers specialisation team is looking good for the Inter Specialisation competition next September.

Presentations were made by Commander Alun Watts, Collingwood's Executive Officer – fittingly a member of the establishment's hockey team.

■ Players looking to hang up their boots at the end of their careers should think again.

The ladies are forming a veterans' team for the over 35s for serving or ex-serving personnel.

Details from Lt Debra Vout on 0785 486 3339 or Julie Voss on 0798 099 3405.

Join the rat race

IF THERE'S a new adventurous sport sweeping the nation, be assured that it won't be long before the Senior Service embraces it.

The latest addition to that list is **adventure racing** – a challenge of between one and seven days, either non-stop or in stages, covering a number of disciplines including running, mountain biking, orienteering, kayaking, climbing, abseiling and swimming.

The appropriately-named Lt Rich Wild (Fleet HQ) wants to form teams for events in 2008, including the Rat Race urban race – three-strong teams run, climb, mountain bike, abseil and kayak through the streets, buildings, and waterways of a city.

Not surprisingly it demands a high level of fitness, as well as determination and, Lt Wild says, a good sense of humour and willingness to enjoy the unexpected.

Teams of three require both male and female members.

Details from the officer on 93832 5141.

More information on this growing sport can be found at www.ratraceadventure.com and www.sleepmonsters.co.uk



Help Mike enjoy more tee times

FORMER matelot Mike Mayo is carving out a name for himself in the world of golf – despite being registered blind.

The ex-mine warfare rating served in the RN between 1979 and 1989; his first ship was HMS Soberton commanded by a Lt Cdr Jonathon Band who kindly made him captain for the day as the youngest member of the ship's company.

He lists Mickey Shone, 'sea dad' Alan 'Bambie' Bamber, Chris Coulson and Tony Smith especially as old RN mates.

Two decades later, Mike, from Lesmahagow near Lanark, was diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration, losing the central vision in both his eyes.

Mike was a keen golfer before being diagnosed.

Post-diagnosis he was introduced to the sport of blind golf – something he has proved to be rather good at (he plays off a handicap of 13).

This year Mike has added six titles to his name, he was runner-up in Clydesdale Sports Council's personality of the year contest, and he has represented Scotland against the auld enemy.

Next year he intends to raise his game even further, aiming to play in the world championships and British Open (both in Ireland), the British Blind Masters – the largest such event in the world – in Wolverhampton, and the traditional Scotland vs England match, as well as Scottish blind golf tournaments.

All of which costs money. The former matelot is ably supported by the RBL and St Dunstan's, but the golfer reckons appearing in next year's tournaments will devour around £3,500.

Beyond Mike's travel and competition fees, he also has to support the expenses of his guide/caddy (*pictured above with Mike*) who gives up his time for free.

If any former shipmates feel like supporting Mike's golf they can e-mail mikemayo@highlander.wanadoo.co.uk or phone 01555 893253.



Chris is toast of Elba

WHERE once Napoleon was exiled, CPO(EW) Chris Vellacott sweated and panted as he earned a podium finish in the Elba ironman race.

Chris, a 45-year-old 'desk pilot' (that's what the note from his CO says) at HMS Agrippa in Naples, came home 60th overall and third in his age group in the sweltering heat of the Mediterranean island.

This was the sixth time Chris had run an ironman – a swim and bike race topped off by a marathon – but his first beyond the shores of this sceptred isle.

The Elba Ironman saw professional ironmen plus Italy's finest competing in a field more than 170 strong.

First there was a 2½-mile swim in the Med, followed by an excruciatingly hilly 112-mile cycle ride (climbing up to

10,000ft at times), followed by an equally-demanding 26-mile run (*pictured left*).

The senior rate crossed the line in 12h 23m – a good 90 minutes down on his usual ironman time, proof of just how difficult conditions in Elba were.

Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the Atlantic, LAET Nathan Gosling (849 NAS) was the fastest European in the Duathlon World Championships, staged in Richmond.

More than 500 competitors from across the globe converged on Virginia for the event – a six-mile run, 25-mile cycle ride and another three-mile run.

The leading hand turned out for the GB squad in the race, coming sixth overall in his age group – the highest-placed European competitor. Overall, he was placed 36th.

Army squash RN prospects

NAVY hopes in the Combined Services individual squash championships were crushed despite a strong field taking to the court.

Temeraire hosted the three-day event which saw five players from each Service in the men's senior, and four in each of the U25s', veterans' and ladies' events competing.

There were high hopes in the U25 section after OM Richard Rowley (HMS Middleton), kindly released by his ship from operations in the North Sea, and current RN U25 champion Mne Martin Sadler (42 Cdo) were available.

Despite still finding his 'land legs', Rowley cruised through to the semis where he had to pull out all the stops to defeat a very fit and most determined Army opponent 3-0.

Sadler, on the other hand, failed in his bid for a place in the other semi; he did, however, triumph in his play-off place to finish a most creditable fifth.

The effort Rowley had put into his semi obviously took its toll and he was not of the same calibre in the final where an effervescent Army signalman had too much fitness to run out the winner 3-0.

It was, nevertheless, a great achievement from Rowley. Serving on an MCMV, he has not had the ideal practice or preparation time for such a physically-demanding tournament.

In the men's senior event, the experienced RN players of Capt Damien May RM (771 NAS), Lt Matt Ellicott (HMS Westminster) in his first senior tournament and POAET Neil Martin (815 NAS), did not seriously consider challenging for top spots, yet after some extraordinarily long tussles all three playing extremely good squash, finished sixth, fifth and seventh respectively, a major improvement from previous years.

The final in that division was predictably between Army OC Sam Miller (ranked 55th in the world two years ago) and last year's champion Flt Lt George Webster (RAF).

Miller, who had not been extended at all throughout the tournament, demonstrated class in every shot and general squash of the highest order, easily beating Webster 3-0.

In the veterans' event Cdr Steve Shaw (Fleet), WO Pete Berrow (MESH IPT) and WO Danny Regan RM (42 Cdo) all came well down the batting order in a division that was dominated by both the Army and RAF, filling all of the top eight places.

In the ladies' competition, Lt Debbie Vout (Temeraire) played some very good squash and again in a very tough league finished a most creditable sixth.

Admiral the Lord Boyce presented trophies and mementos to winners and runners-up and praised all players for the outstanding level of squash throughout the tournament.

Canoe poloists avenge defeat

TEMERAIRE played host to the Inter-Service canoe polo championship – allowing the RN to eradicate a 12-month 'blip'.

Last year, after long-time RN dominance of the sport, the RAF upset the apple cart to take the title.

Evidently, that victory was a 'blip', for under the leadership of Lt Matt Twisleton and NA Kirsty Moffat the Naval Service, after many hard fought games over three days last month, won back the Inter-Service Cup.

There was a strong turn out from the other services and a team from the MOD, with a highly-charged atmosphere on the poolside, and the teams were cheered on by a large number of spectators on the balcony.

Col David Hook (Deputy Commander 3 Cdo Bde) – the RN Kayaking Association chairman – presented the prizes.

Baa-Baas Sheared



THE Navy's LAEM Dave Pascoe captained the Combined Services to a narrow victory against legendary rugby union side the Barbarians in the eighth annual clash between the two at Plymouth Albion's Brickfields Recreational Ground.

Twelve months ago, the Baa-Baas triumphed in a high-scoring match 33-25.

This year's contest also saw a shedload of points on the board – but in the CS team's favour.

A crowd of nearly 3,000 saw RN winger Josh Drauniniu crash over the line twice inside the opening 17 minutes.

The Fijian powered along the wing before touching down under the posts for the opener (converted by the CS skipper), then added a second four minutes later after collecting a chip kick.

That prompted a Barbarians' response, but despite the fightback, the Services held on to the lead until the 68th minute when Albion and Baa-Baas back Brad Davies scored his second try to give the international all-stars a 24-20 lead.

The Forces claimed a 27-24 victory, however, thanks to a last-minute converted try.

Profits from the match were donated to the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal.

Picture: LA(Phot)
Steve Johncock,
FRPU Drake



● I see something beginning with 's'... Lt Orlando Rogers and Capt Ben Gaffney train for their 3,000-mile row in their specially-adapted boat

Go Commando, Row Commando

WHILE their commando comrades recreate the 'Cockleshell Heroes' mission (see page 21), Lt Orlando Rogers and Capt Ben Gaffney face an ever greater challenge in a rowing boat: to cross the Atlantic in record time.

The two officers, both based at CTC RM, intend to leave La Gomera in the Canary Islands on December 2 and arrive in English Harbour on or before January 8 having covered 3,000 miles.

If the gods are against them, they'll contend with waves up to 30ft high, the odd shark circling their 24ft ocean rowing boat Go Commando, and the vagaries of the mid Atlantic – and the trip could take as long as 70 days instead of the 37 needed to break the existing record.

Luckily, Go Commando should give them a head start. Under the name All Relative it won the 2005-06 Atlantic rowing race with a crew of four. It's subsequently been converted for a crew of two rather than four.

Around 25 teams are competing against the clock in this year's race, but the RM duo believe their coveted green berets could give them the edge – even though neither of them has rowed before this race.

"Learning to row is only one per cent of the Atlantic challenge – the other 99 is in the mind, which is where our training comes in," said Lt Rogers.

Capt Gaffney added: "Orlando and I have been through physical exhaustion and sleep deprivation before. If commando training cannot prepare us mentally for this challenge, then I don't know what will."

You can follow the pair's progress at www.rowcommando.com

Tis a season to be jolly

ALL of the RN's representatives sides have been in action in the opening weeks of the football season – with encouraging performances and positive outcomes (bar one).

We'll begin with the bar one...

RN Seniors 0 Gosport 2

This was the first game of the season under new head coach Capt Steve Marr RM and assistant coach CPOPT Paul Barton.

A very encouraging team performance despite the defeat, with lots of positives to take forward and especially noteworthy performances from Cpl Graham Carr (RN captain), POPT Ritchie Way, LPT Steve Young and AET Mark Wilkes.

RN Women 3 Christchurch 1

The ladies' season opener under manager CPOMEA Lou Lewis saw a very strong squad take to the field. Returning to the side were LPT Nat Bavister, PO Marissa Dryhurst, LPT Lisa Farthing and Std Angie Comrie, while Wtr Nicky Aston made her debut.

The Navy started very strongly and hit the bar after only three minutes – so it was a shock when Christchurch took the lead three minutes later. The RN quickly regained their dominance and it was one-way traffic for the rest of the half. The Christchurch defence had no answer to the movement of Bavister or the pace of OM Caphill and Aston up front.

Aston followed in from the edge of the area to drive in a perfect left foot volley on nine minutes. Bavister bagged the ladies' second in the 22nd minute, drilling a low shot across the keeper into the bottom left corner.

The RN finished the half camped in the Christchurch half and, after a series of corners, one near-post effort found the head of PO Marissa Dryhurst, who had played really well at centre half.

Christchurch fielded a stronger team in the second period, but the



● Collingwood on the ball during their 6-0 defeat to Portsmouth University



Onside with Capt Paul Cunningham, RNFA

RN women did well to counter some determined play.

This was a really encouraging Navy victory in their first game of the season, especially in the first half when the passing and movement of the ladies saw numerous chances being created.

RN U23s 0 Dorchester Town Youth 0

Under the new leadership of WO1 Steve Rule, the U23s put in an excellent performance and deserved this hard-fought draw.

Dorchester dictated a high tempo with pressurised play directed in midfield, keeping ET(ME) Danny Kerr (captain) and ET(ME) 'Peggy' Mitchell busy.

The central defensive pairing of ET(ME) Dickie Davidson and

WEA Jamie Ritchie were under some sustained pressure with AB(CIS)(SM) Hawke and S/Lt Dodd integrating well as assured full backs.

The first 20 minutes saw the RN side soak up pressure, before AET Jamie Thirkle and ET(WE) Jason Farnsworth were drawn into the game with some intelligent play in the channels, complemented by their ability to switch from left to right flanks.

The front pairing of WEA Mike O'Neill and LAET Craig Seemark were made to work hard by a talented Dorchester back line and as the game approached half-time the sides were matched.

In the final five minutes of the first half, a fine commanding performance by the RN keeper ET(ME) Nige Mee was capped

by an athletic full-stretch save that ensured both score sheets were clean at the break.

With a healthy squad, the opportunity presented itself to change things at half time: AB Craig Newman, LMEA Mark Toms and ET(ME) Lee Keneally (goalkeeper) were all brought on.

The RN squad came close within five minutes of the re-start with some clever play from ET(ME) Kerr feeding Seemark to bear down on goal although his strike went over the bar.

The introduction of AB Collins at right back allowed Hawke to test the Dorchester full back with his mazy runs, complemented by a similar style of play by AET Thirkle on the left.

As the half wore on, further changes saw AB Sam Stephens, AET Rob Tillsley and S/LT Chris Carrabine take to the field and fresh legs started to tell in the final 20 minutes but Navy pressure was unable to penetrate the Dorchester rearguard.

Not to be outdone by the first-half goalkeeping performance of Mee, Keneally pulled off a save late in the game, edging the ball on to the post when it was destined for the top corner.

RN Seniors 4 Bashley FC 0

A first-class disciplined team performance resulting in a convincing victory against a team from the Southern League Premier Division (one league below football Conference South).

Two first-half goals from Sgt Ritchie Hope and AET Danny Williams were nicely balanced by a second-period brace from LPT Steve Young.

Many of the players caught the eye but special mentions go to POPT Ritchie Way, LPT Steve Young, Cpl Adam Fowler and MEM Jamie Thirkle.

RN Women 1 Prison Service 1

A warm autumn evening in Portsmouth saw both teams battle hard in a goalless first half, but the deadlock was broken by the

opposition on the hour.

With time running out and the Navy still striving to find an equaliser, POPT Lisa Farthing's 92nd-minute free kick from 40 yards found their goalkeeper flat footed and the ball drifted over her head.

This was just desserts for all the effort put in. The scoreline reflected a keenly-contested match with notable performances from Kayleigh Edwards and LPT Bavister (Sultan).

RN Seniors 2 Amateur Football Alliance 1

The RN seniors put in a very workmanlike performance, and with only 14 players available due to injuries, suspensions and non-availabilities, this was a very significant win for the squad in their third game of the season.

It was a tight game, goalless until the AFA scored via a penalty half-way through the second period. The RN responded fantastically with late goals from POPT Way and a deft header from Mne Dan Boere – virtually the last 'kick' of the game.

There were also strong performances from Lt Sean Lister and WEA Mike O'Neil to cap this impressive victory. After the match, RNFA Chairman Capt Rupert Wallace made a presentation to the AFA in this their centenary year.

On a local football level, HMS Collingwood MWS Phase 2 trainees challenged Portsmouth University to two friendlies.

The women kicked off first – up against a student side which boasted five Pompey players in its ranks. Collingwood left the field heavily defeated (13-0 – a scoreline which, we're told, doesn't truly reflect the game).

The men fared slightly better although the Uni once again fielded a full-strength side. Thanks to the efforts of keeper Dinga Bell, who pulled off a string of fine saves, Collingwood managed to limit the score to 6-0 to the students.

Next month



SPORT



Tight fit – Exeter goes Greek



Lords of leaping – submarine rescue SPAG-style



Aground force – how to drive from ship to shore

Plus

Focus on operations in the Gulf

And

Bye bye Basra – 845 NAS bid farewell to Iraq



● Rolling thunder... LAET Jamie Adam roars around the Thruxton circuit in the Fraser's of Gloucester race
Picture: PO 'Dutchy' Holland, Phoenix NBCD School

Thunder at Thruxton

A VERY wet and damp Thruxton hosted round sixteen of the North Gloucester Road Racing Championship with a clutch of riders from the **Royal Navy Motorcycle Club**.

There was a strong turn-out from the Senior Service bikers with CPO Gary Morris (HMS Collingwood), LAET Jamie Adam (RNAS Culdrose), Sgt Bill Callister (UKLF CSG), L/Cpl Tom Carver (40 Cdo), and Sean Carter (RMR) hitting the Hampshire tarmac, writes PO 'Dutchy' Holland, Phoenix NBCD School.

Gary lined up for the 400cc Streetstocks and Formula 400, Jamie, Bill, and Tom were up for the George White 600cc (GW 600) and Fraser's of Gloucester (FoG), whilst Sean took part in the Team Spidey Sound of Thunder (*I've no idea what that is but my senses are tingling – Ed*).

The GW 600 was split into two heats due to the number of competitors. Tom qualified in 30th in the first heat while Bill and Jamie took part in the second preliminary, qualifying 11th and 22nd respectively.

The FoG – again held over two sessions – saw Bill and Tom qualify sixth and 48th respectively with Jamie in session two qualifying 28th.

Gary qualified 14th in the Streetstocks and 29th in the Formula 400, with Sean qualifying in 12th in the Team Spidey race.

All the qualifying took place in the morning, on a very wet track, with poor visibility adding to the excitement (or challenge depending upon your perspective).

All the riders had a good day with the exception of Jamie who had to make a few suspension adjustments ready for the afternoon's racing.

Luckily, the weather drastically improved as the day progressed, with the afternoon's events taking place on a dry but cold track.

The GW 600 was up first. Bill got off to a good start but fell back through the field due to a steering damper problem and eventually finished 19th.

Jamie and Tom raced in the B final with Jamie having a blinder, moving up from 22nd to take the lead for a couple of laps before eventually fading to finish fifth.

Tom was taking things easy as this was his first time at Thruxton. After starting in 30th he climbed to 20th by the chequered flag.

In the FoG, Bill lined up 12th on the grid in the A Final – quite an achievement considering the majority of the field were riding 1000cc bikes.

After a storming start he fell back through the field, as the 1000cc bikes could finally use their legs on the dry, ultra-fast Thruxton Circuit.

Bill eventually finished 22nd in round one, while Jamie again rose through the field to finish 13th in round two. Tom continued to improve, moving through the field to finish 20th in round three.

Gary had a reasonable day in his final races of the season (he's about to take two years out of racing joining HMS Echo).

In a closely-fought Streetstock race Gary finished 12th in class whilst in the Formula 400, following a stalled start, he came 31st.

Sean was making only his second appearance this season – and making his debut at Thruxton. He finished a creditable 15th in the Team Spidey race.

Lions maul allcomers

THE Lancaster Lions rugby union squad powered their way around the Baltic, mauling their opponents as they went.

The frigate has one of the most active 15-a-side teams in the Fleet, coming to the fore during the Red Rose's Caribbean deployment last year.

They resumed battle on the rugby pitch during their autumn tour-of-duty in the Baltic, opening with a clash on Norwegian soil.

This was the first outing of Lancaster's multi-national team (every home nation is represented in the 15, as well as New Zealand and Fiji).

Oslo Rugby Club had played an important cup semi-final just the day before the ship arrived, so only 11 players were available. The ship loaned two men, so the squads locked horns for a 13-a-side clash.

With no experienced front row in the opposition the game was played with uncontested scrums.

Right from the whistle it was obvious that the Lions were the much stronger team. Forging runs from AB(Logs) 'Tag' Tagicakibau and LPT Stevie Homer easily broke the lines of the defence and tries were coming fast and furious.

The try count was high but the boot let the sailors down: DMEO Lt Matty Lee – the Lions' New Zealand 'ringer' – finished the match without kicking a single point.

As Lancaster piled on the points, the match turned into a bit of an exhibition with the team using the run-out to practise all facets of the game of rugby.

The tackle of the day came from Tag Tagicakibau. Not only did the opposition player leave the field with a cut to the head but LS Polly Perkins damaged his neck as the man mountain took him out as well.

The Lions ran out 68-0 victors and celebrated at the British Embassy ("the only place in Oslo to sell cheap beer").

The second match of Lancaster's tour proved a much sterner test for the marauders: Kiel RFC.

It was obvious from the kick-off that this was going to be a tough game; Kiel were well-drilled and tackled hard.

Lancaster, however, put the first points on the board when POET Dan Breward crossed in the corner for the first try. Lt Lee kept up the form from his previous game and missed the conversion. He was subsequently sacked from kicking duties.

Lancaster's strong runners Tag Tagicakibau at No.8 and centre LPT Homer were being closed down more quickly in this game.

Kiel managed to raise their game and were awarded two penalties in quick succession which they converted to give the Germans a one-point lead.

The penalties came with the Lions in disarray, thanks in part to stand-in scrum half WO2 George Embleton being sin-binned for an unfortunate kick to the head (particularly unfortunate for the opposition player...).

The sailors managed to re-arrange themselves and see off the Kiel pressure until the break.

The second period opened very much as the first had finished – two evenly-matched teams playing good, hard rugby.

Tag Tagicakibau continued to make his big runs but made one tackle too many and managed to break his shoulder. He wanted to play on but one look at his shoulder ensured he was off.

The injury to Tag seemed to spur on the Lions, however.

The forwards picked up their game and stormed forward into the opposition. The pressure told and Kiel gave away a penalty in kicking range.

As Matty Lee had been dropped, up stepped AB(CIS)



● Norwegian blue... 'Tag' Tagicakibau powers through the Oslo lines during the Lions 68-0 victory
Picture: LA(Phot) Nick 'Whoopi' Crusham

Tom O'Connor. Although his kick just sailed past the near post, the team had discovered a new kicker.

Powerful, surging runs from WO2 Arnie Palmer, POLOGS Bobby Rennie and Ted Bundy gave a quick ball out to the backs which eventually saw Stevie Homer go over the line for a try, converted by O'Connor.

Further good running and pressure resulted in an excellent individual try in the corner for Homer and once again O'Connor

slotted over for a 19-6 lead for Lancaster.

Kiel came back hard in the last few minutes. The ref had been outstanding throughout the game but the five final minutes lasted about 15 and resulted in Kiel being awarded a controversial last-minute try to narrow the final score to 19-11 to the Lions.

Kiel hosted the sailors in their clubhouse after the game with more cheap beer and a free barbecue.

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